

Sunday December 20th, 2020 Advent Four

9.15am Morning Prayer with music at Little Paxton

10.30am Morning Prayer with carols at Great Paxton

4.00pm Outdoor Carols and readings in Little Paxton Churchyard.

Wednesday December 23rd

4.00pm Christingle at Little Paxton (booking only)

7.00pm Outdoor Carols in Great Paxton Churchyard

Christmas Eve

2.00pm Christingle at Little Paxton (booking only)

5.00pm Outdoor Carols in Diddington Churchyard

10.00pm The First Communion of Christmas at Little Paxton
(booking only)

11.30am Celebrating Christmas at Southoe with music and readings.

To book place(s) at the Little Paxton indoor services, please contact:

Nicci Jones 07971 677460

or Helen Young 01480 216255 / young_paxton@ntlworld.com

Southoe Church and Diddington Church remain open for private prayer

Our Next You Tube service will be ready for Sunday December 20th and features a lovely Christmas journey backdrop created by Anita and Leslie Bailey. Do watch if you can. The link will be in our weekly email from Anita which comes out on Saturday evening, and on our benefice Facebook page @thePaxtonsBenefice



The Journey to Bethlehem by Anita and Leslie

FOUR

The Benefice of the Paxtons with Diddington and Southoe

Sunday December 20th, 2020

“Keeping in Touch” Edition 39



‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’

The pink candle in the Advent Ring represents Jesus’ Mother Mary.

Annette writes:

As I write, I see that our government is telling us to have a smaller, shorter Christmas. The latest in a long line of pronouncements that seem to measure the amount of “Christmas” we may have by how many days families can or cannot meet up.

At one point it was thought Christmas may be cancelled due to Covid, but the lessening of restrictions, albeit coming now with caution, means that at least we can have a “shorter” Christmas. I know by the time this KIT is printed, it may all have changed again.

The fact is that Christmas isn’t measured in government pronouncements.

Since the 6th Century AD there have been 12 days in the religious Christmas season, stretching from December 25th to 5th January and in the Middle Ages in England, this period was one of continuous merry making and feasting which reached its climax on Twelfth Night.

But the message which lies at the heart of Christmas cannot be measured in how much social interaction there can be this year, or even in how much merry making there can normally be in 12 days. The love which the Christ child brings into our world and into our troubled hearts is for every day, every minute of our lives.

LOVE, JOY, HOPE, PEACE

May these great gifts be yours this Christmastide, and in abundance, whatever your circumstances may be. Take care and stay very safe.

With love and prayers these Christmas days, Annette.

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ONE

A Prayer for Christmas

Walk softly, as you go through Christmas, that each step may bring you down the starlit path, to the manger bed.
Talk quietly, as you Speak of Christmas, that you shall not drown out the glorious song of angels.
Kneel reverently as you pause for Christmas, that you may feel again the Spirit of the Nativity, rekindled in your soul
Rise eagerly, after you have trod the Christmas Path, that you may serve more fully, the one whose birth we hail. Amen

The Gospel for Advent Four: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

The Collect for Advent Four

Eternal God, as Mary waited for the birth of your Son, so we wait for his coming in glory; bring us through the birth pangs of this present age to see, with her, our great salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9: 6



Reflections from Annette on Jesus' mother Mary



Henry Ossawa Tanner: The Annunciation.

What do we know about this young girl Mary, who makes such an incredible response to a momentous declaration given by an angel and who is arguably history's most venerated mother?

During her childhood she lived in Nazareth where she was put into an arranged marriage with the carpenter Joseph. Gospel writer Luke reports that when Mary was perhaps a little over 12 years old, while she was living with her parents, not yet fully married to Joseph, an angel visited and told her she would give birth to a holy child who would be called "the Son of God." We have to remember that being pregnant out of wedlock was dangerous and could entail severe punishment.

The momentous fact is that Mary, the God-bearer, said Yes to the angelic messenger. We read that Mary was indeed **troubled** by the appearance of the angel; who wouldn't have been? The Greek word used means deeply agitated, taken aback, anxious, all perfectly natural reactions.

Not only had an angel spoken to her, but the message was going to be hard to explain to others. **But she said YES "Let it be to me according to your word" and she overcame any hesitancy she might have felt.**

There are many ways to find a spiritual path towards the manger scene these nativity days. Maybe remembering especially Mary's YES, despite her being perplexed, can help us to be always ready to say YES to God; whether our path be easy or one that is full of uncertainty and twists and turns. As we think of Mary saying that powerful and momentous YES to God, it can remind us too of the momentous YES which her son Jesus said in the garden of Gethsemane 30 years or so later.

This Christmas may our personal response to God's calling be a response of wholehearted faith in him who loves us for all eternity. May we worship the new-born Saviour with open hands and open hearts, ready to embrace Him as our Lord and Saviour and to follow wherever he may lead us.

TWO

THREE