

On the second Sunday of Advent, the second purple candle is lit., sometimes called the "Bethlehem Candle," this candle represents love and peace - both God's love for us and ours for him and others.

Dear Friends,

Change is afoot. This is true of every age but ours has been marked by some dramatic changes in the life of our nation. We might mention Brexit, the pandemic, the effects of the war in Ukraine, political turmoil, economic crises, environmental fracture and the death of the Queen. Moreover, in the past week the results of the 2021 census reveal change on several fronts in our society. We have become a much more ethnically diverse country. There are more Muslims and Hindus. Notably, for the first time, less than half of the population describe themselves as Christian. Meanwhile, those who say they have no religion have increased substantially. In this light, it is understandable that there have been renewed calls for the disestablishment of the Church of England.

It would be easy to feel dispirited by the census. But let us not lose heart. As the archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said, the census 'throws down a challenge to us not only to trust that God will build his kingdom on Earth but also to play our part in making Christ known.' He also noted that, though most people no longer automatically identify as Christian, many still seek spiritual wisdom and values.

If anything, this should encourage us to dive more deeply into our faith. For there is a happy, albeit demanding, paradox at the heart of Christianity. Namely, that the closer we come to God in Christ, the more we are called to show generosity to all; to celebrate human difference and diversity; to defend freedom of religion, conscience and thought; to live and work alongside all those of goodwill, of different faiths and none, for the sake of justice, peace and the common good.

Here is a vision of how God's love moves with unstoppable momentum through our world to transform it in ways that escape the Church and the possession of any one group. In the Gospel for this Sunday and next, this dynamic vision sounds out in the mysterious figure of John the Baptist. From his unadorned vantage point in the desert, John pierces through all our political and personal anxieties with a profound summons: repent.

In other words, turn and change. Turn from all that diminishes our own and others' humanity; turn from all prejudice, violence, selfishness, fear and despair; and turn to the light of God's love revealed in the fullness of Christ's humanity and his subversive championing of sinners and outcasts. Turn and be changed by that same love whose transformative power is far greater than any other change, not least because it softens recalcitrant hearts, makes us agents of God's change and empowers us to be those who help usher in a more humane society, one that cherishes genuine difference within life-giving communion. Repentance is change that serves the fully divine and fully human consensus embodied in Christ. And this is a consensus that the Church of England, for all its failings, seeks to promote with those of all faiths and none. Paradoxically, the 2021 census might just be seen to suggest that this is happening in unexpected ways amid all the turmoil of our times.

With my prayers and blessings,  
Fr Angus

**Advent and Christmas Dates (in addition to regular Sunday services):**

**18 December** – 4pm Parish Carol Service – A service featuring well-known carols, beautiful choral music, and readings proclaiming the birth of Christ.

**20 December** – 7pm Carol Singing – All are welcome to come along and sing Christmas Carols at locations around the parish. Minced pies and hot beverages supplied.

**24 December** – 3pm Carols around the Crib (for families and young children) – Through song, story and actions, take part in the wonder and joy of the nativity.

**24 December** – 11pm Midnight Mass – The Light shines in the darkness; the Word becomes flesh. Experience the mystery of Christ's Incarnation with choral music and the blessing of the crib.

**25 December** – 10am Choral Mass – With great joy and thanksgiving, we celebrate the birth of Jesus at our main Sunday Parish Mass. All are welcome

**Wednesday Compline/Night Prayer** – There will be a contemplative service of night prayer every Wednesday during Advent 7:30pm in the Lady Chapel. The service will be contemplative, have a sung element and a period of silence.

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## **This Week's Diary**

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December -- St George's Tots\_in the Centre – 10:30am to 12:00pm

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> – WRAP Community Choir - 7.30pm to 9.00pm **(Concert on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> Dec)**

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> - Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 11.30am

WRAP-CHAT Musical Entertainment and Tea Party in the Centre 3.00pm

Compline in the Lady Chapel 7.30pm

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> -- Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 9.30am

Advent Reflection Course in the Rectory - 1.30pm – 3.00pm

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Fair - 11.00am to 2.00pm in the Centre

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> - Advent 2 - Parish Mass 10.00 am

**Thursday afternoon Advent Reflection Group** – each Thursday during Advent - 1:30pm-3:00pm in the Rectory.– Prayer and reflection with Scripture, Art and Music.” Course materials will be supplied and simple refreshments served. There is a sign-up sheet from Sunday to gauge interest and availability.

**Carol singing in the parish, 7pm Tuesday 20 December** –You are invited to join a group of songsters, drawn from our choir and congregation, to go out singing carols in the local community. No previous experience required! The proposal is to begin at the Amphitheatre and then, singing on the way, to Royal Close, off York Road. The hope is that mince pies and hot drinks will be served along the route. Please speak to Sue Howell-Evans or Fr Angus if you are interested. A sign-up sheet is available at the back of church.

**Our Christmas Fair** will be taking place on **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December** --11.00am to 2.00pm in the Centre, Entrance is free so we hope to be very busy with many stalls and a visit from Father Christmas.

We are very grateful for all the generous donations received, we would still appreciate edible Christmas treats for the hampers, mince pies, and cakes for the cake stall.

We will be serving soup and bread, also sausage rolls and mince pies for lunch. Children will get a box with sausage rolls ,a piece of fruit a biscuit and a drink.

**WRAP-CHAT TEA PARTY –Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> Dec.** in The Centre @ 3pm. With musical entertainment by our own Sue Howell Evans, refreshments and a raffle. All are welcome. Contact Geraldine, Fr Bill or Fr Philip. A programme of events for January to June 2023 will be available on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**The WRAP COMMUNITY CHOIR Concert** is back after a two year break, to be held on **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December** @ 7.30pm in the church. Entry is free with a donation basket at the end for two local charities – Children on the Edge and CONTACT 88. Please do come and support St George's community choir.

**Lakeview Care Home:** Many of you will be aware of the new care home that is being built at the end of Whyke Road. The building works are now almost finished and new residents will be moving in soon. Fr Angus has met the management team on site. They are keen to build relationships within the wider community, especially with St George's as the local parish church. It has been agreed that from February next year, Fr Angus will start to take a regular communion service at Lakeview. The hope is that there will be other forms of engagement with residents around such things as art, music and reading. Do let Fr Angus know if you are interested in volunteering. For more information on the Care Home please see coloured brochures at the back of church.

St Stephen's Church in North Mundham are holding a **Christmas Tree Festival** in their church from Monday 5 December 2022 till Saturday 10 December 2022, open every day from 4:30pm to 7:30pm Members of St George's congregation are invited, entry is free.

**Electricity within the Church & Centre** Please help us by switching off any lights, heating, appliances, etc when not required as our business tariff has increased considerably, sending our utility bills sky high.

### **Contact details:**

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