

BENEFACTIVE BULLETIN

Church News for

Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass

21st December 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Service Times and Venues

Daily Morning and Evening Prayer conference calls at 8:30am and 4:00pm
Thursdays 10:30am BCP communion at St Gregory's

	<i>Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale</i>	<i>Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill</i>	<i>16:00—Evensong conference call</i>
21st Dec	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass # 11am St John's, Leeming #	St Mary's Thornton Watlass
28th Dec	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	No evening prayer
4th Jan	8:00am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	St Gregory's, Bedale
	9:15am St Gregory's #F	11am St John's, Leeming #	

Communion F Facebook

Conference Call Tel 03330110945 and enter when prompted Room No.66307496# PIN 9498

Additional Services

Monday 22nd Dec	6pm	Carol Service with mulled wine and mince pies	Burrill Mission Church
Tuesday 23rd Dec	From 10am	Tuesday Togetherness—mince pies and communion	Chantry Hall, Bedale
Christmas Eve— Wednesday 24th Dec	3pm	Crib Service	St Mary's, Thornton Watlass
	4pm	Crib Service	St Gregory's, Bedale
	7:30pm	Christmas Communion	St John's, Leeming
	11:30pm	Midnight Communion	St Mary's, Thornton Watlass
	11:30pm	Midnight Communion	St Gregory's, Bedale
Christmas Day— Thursday 25th Dec	8:00am	Christmas Communion	St Gregory's, Bedale
	9:00am	Christmas Communion	Burrill Mission Church
	10:00am	Christmas Service	St Gregory's, Bedale
	10:45am	Christmas Communion	St Mary's, Thornton Watlass

NOTICES

This week's floodlighting is in memory of

Herbert Smith



To sponsor the floodlighting in memory of someone then please get in touch with Sarah in the office on 07949 006681 or admin@bedale.church

PRAYERS

OUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR

Bel Newman, Mark Newman, Lesley Hall, Delma Bode, John Hall, Olive Robinson, Chris, Justin, Alison, Dan, John, Rachel Oysten, Doris Pearson, Mal Rowland, Michelle Hammond, Terry and Marion, Caleb, Bailey Cuthbert, Brenda, Ann Madsen, and Claire Bell.

RIP

Steve Madsen, Renee Stag, Alistair Bain, Bob Turnbull, Joan Marshall, and Meg Graham.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory

ADVENT WREATH

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Focus: Luke 1:26–38)

Reader 1: O God, we light the fourth candle of Advent. *(The fourth candle is lit)*

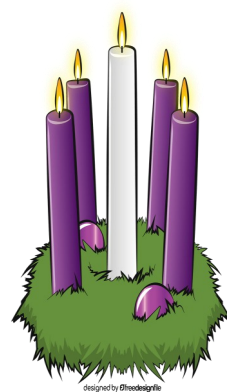
Reader 2: We hear your angel Gabriel and witness the faith of Mary. Fill us with your grace and light.

Reader 1: Mary was a young, strong, spiritual woman. Even though her life was not easy, she heard God's voice and said yes. Her song was a prayer that would uplift those who were downtrodden. Her lyrics shattered the proud and called the world to change. She would bear within her the promised child, Jesus, the Light of the World. This Advent, we respond to God's beckoning to us as well.

**Revealing God, visit us and fill us with your Spirit.
Bring your good news to life within us.
Give us courage to carry your light
into the injustices and shadows of this world. Amen.**

Sing - Tune - Love Divine

**Shine on us, O God of justice;
Guide our path through gloom of night;
Bear within us Wisdom's glory;
Come to us, O Christ the Light.**



PRAYERS AND READINGS

Collect

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading - Isaiah 7.10–16

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Second Reading - Romans 1.1–7

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,
To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 1.18–end

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel’,

which means, ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Post Communion Prayer

Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMENTARY

We are on the very brink of the nativity. Our sense of the power of the One coming in has been stretched, challenged and recast over the past three weeks. Now the reality of that power begins to dawn more clearly, and what is astonishing about it is that this power is confident enough to be vulnerable. And that means confident enough in us to be vulnerable to us.

King Ahaz did not have the confidence to be vulnerable, yet Isaiah gives him a sign anyhow, a quiet, gentle, seemingly ordinary one. A girl is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Emmanuel. A totally natural sign, totally from a human perspective, rather than from something special and divine. And yet in this gesture of quietness and confidence, God will reveal himself as the one who loves his people and brings his kingdom to flourishing. It is the sort of sign of those whose attention is fixed on current affairs, on power politics, on strategic calculations.

Matthew has seen that Isaiah's promise of a sign relating to a kingdom flows into the much fuller sign that is happening now. The sign that Isaiah pointed to was revealing itself in gentleness as the girl chosen to bear the son was not in a protected enclave. On the contrary, the girl who was found to be with child was to share the disgrace of being a single mother in a society in which such things might easily lead to death. She was to fear for her reputation, and maybe for her life.

What sort of power is it that allows itself to be so vulnerable? It is prepared to trust itself to one of the most unreliable features of human existence—not only the pain and riskiness of human gestation and childbirth, but also the whole of human failure about male honour, and the potential for violence that goes with female dependency. Beyond this, as Matthew makes clear, this power is prepared to allow itself to be vulnerable to that most dangerous of constructs: the law. Joseph was a righteous man and knew well what Deuteronomy 22 prescribes for cases such as Mary's pregnancy: death by stoning. But Joseph's righteousness consisted in his being inclined to interpret that law in the most gentle way possible: his seeking to obey it by "putting her away quietly". When Joseph decided to apply the law in this way, it was an act of interpretation. This decision was made just prior to the Lord's inviting Joseph to consider another possible interpretation: that Mary's pregnancy was not in any way something which fell foul of the law, but something that came from the Holy Spirit. Joseph had a dream, and in the light of that dream he was invited to make an interpretation with enormous practical consequences.

Again: how extraordinary is a power that is gentle and confident enough to enter into the consequences of a human act of interpretation? There is no sign that is not also a human act of interpretation, and there can be no riskier way than this to enter into the realm of signs. This pregnant woman is either an adulteress or a virgin blessed by God. What power is it that is prepared to trust that a human will choose the latter, infinitely less plausible interpretation, and then graciously cover over the vulnerability of his bride-to-be and allow the sign to flourish?

It is little wonder that in Galatians, Paul emphasizes that Jesus was born under the law, for Jesus' vulnerability to the law is the sign of the power of the One who was to fulfil the whole purpose of the law. This is all about power, as is made magnificently clear in the introduction to Romans. The fulfilment of all God's promises will come through someone who is of the now failed and insignificant line of David. This one will be declared or ordained the high priest of God, God's son, Yahweh himself, bearing the name by his passing through death in the spirit of holiness. Vulnerability to mere flesh; vulnerability to the law; vulnerability to death: these will be the signs of the power of the One coming in, the signs of his confidence in us, in what we can become, and in what he can make of us.