



BENEFICE BULLETIN

Church News for

Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass

15th December 2025

Third 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

	Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale	Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill	16:00—Evensong conference call
14th Dec	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass -	No Evensong at Burrill Church
21st Dec	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	St Mary's Thornton Watlass
		11am St John's, Leeming #	

Communion F Facebook

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

NOTICES

ADVENT and CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Tues 16 Tuesday Togetherness Christmas Lunch

Wed 17 9:30am & 10:30am

Bedale Primary School Christmas Church Service

Wed 17 7pm Leeming Carol Service

Thu 18 6pm Thornton Watlass School Church Service

7.30pm Carols Around the Village & in the Buck Inn

2pm Aiskew Leeming Bar School Carol Service

6pm Blue Christmas Service in St Gregory's

Sun 21 6pm Town Carol Service



Advent Appeal

Mary's Meals provides life-changing school meals to children living in some of the world's poorest communities. For our Benefice advent appeal we will be collecting coins and notes from any country, as well as old UK currency no longer in circulation. This can be used to fund the work of Mary's Meals, and is an easy and meaningful way to recycle unused money while supporting their mission. There will be leaflets at the back of each church, and donations can be given to any of the church wardens, or brought to the office.

PRAYERS AND READINGS

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, Adrian, Pam and Mike Ryder, Ann Madsen and Claire Bell.

RIP

Steve Madsen Renee Stag Alistair Bain Bob Turnbull Joan Marshall & Margaret Graham.
May they rest in peace and rise in glory

The Passing Bell was rung for Steve Madsen, Reader in the Benefice of Bedale, Saturday
13 December. His funeral is in St Gregory's Mon 22nd December at 2pm

ADVENT WREATH

Third Sunday of Advent (Focus: John 1:6–8, 8–11)

Reader 1: We light the third candle of Advent. *(The third candle is lit.)*

Reader 2: We look to John, the one you sent, to point us to your light.
he light will come into our world and enlighten everyone.

Reader 1: God sent John the Baptizer to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus Christ, the true Light of the World. John called for people to repent of their sins and to live faithfully. He baptized with a cleansing water and proclaimed the new life that Christ, the one who would follow him, would bring. This Advent, we ask for God's mercy and a joyful new beginning.

Merciful God, we give thanks that you send messengers like John to call us to greater faith. We ask that in these days we prepare for you in prayer and acts of holy compassion.

Forgive us and lead us to your light. 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.**

Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen



First reading - Isaiah 35.1–10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf stopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Second Reading - James 5.7–10

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 11.2–112

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Post Communion Prayer

**We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face; who is alive and reigns now and for ever.**

Amen

Commentary

Again, Matthew has provided, in Jesus' words, the link with the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, and the concern for the poor is central to both the psalm and the Magnificat. Jesus' phrase 'those born of woman' remind us of the significance of the setting of the Magnificat in the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth.

Isaiah 35.1-10 Isaiah had prophesied the immediate destruction of Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon in 33.9. Now this triumphal hymn announces hope. Commentators have seen this chapter as owing more to the time after the exile than to the days of the Isaiah who had a vision of God in the Temple (chapter 6). The composition of the book spans at least two centuries. It takes a long time for hope to emerge. The picture of the revealing of God's glory to the whole world resembles that found in Isaiah 40, and the conclusion of the hymn in verse 10 is identical to the refrain in 51.11. 'The crocus' is particularly evocative. The heat of summer leaves the land parched and at the first appearance of autumn rain, crocuses, bearing saffron, appear within days. The prophet looks forward to water in the desert and then to a restoration of wholeness, symbolised by the healing of the deaf and blind. The highway is not for God but for God's ransomed people, to enable them to come to this new, fertile land.

James 5.7-10 This very early, unique witness to the life of the Early Church takes its name from the 'brother of the Lord', who experienced a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15.7) and went on to lead the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 15, esp verse 13). His hopes, observations and reprimands to the rest of the Church still have power to stir and can prove quite refreshing. His warnings about grumbling are as appropriate to our own days as to his! The community is experiencing hardships and, rather than promising an easy deliverance, James points to the example of faithfulness exhibited by the prophets and, in verse 11, Job.

Matthew 11.2-11 Note how different Jesus' quotations from Isaiah (26.19; 29.18; 35.5–6; 42.7, 18; and 61.1) are from those used by John in last week's reading. In citing Isaiah, Jesus carefully edits out references to violence and wrath as the prophecies are fulfilled. There is nothing of Isaiah 26.20 ('hide yourselves ... until the wrath is past'), 29.20 ('the tyrant shall be no more'), 35.4 ('your God ... will come with vengeance ... terrible recompense'). In this he reflects the turning away from anger of the later chapters of Isaiah (39 onwards) compared with the earlier ones. Why is John now doubtful? The Gospel has already presented evidence of the fulfilment of the prophecies quoted. Was John also expecting a violent overthrow of Herod and his own release and an age of divine judgement to dawn? His expectation was that Jesus would fulfil Malachi 3.1-2 ('who can endure the day of his coming ... ?'). John had been extremely confrontational. Jesus, by contrast says 'blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me' (v. 6). He praises the Baptist, as a prophet, as one foretold, the messenger to prepare the way as in Malachi 3.1, before pointing out where John has fallen short. The least in the kingdom is greater than he. John, in expecting judgement to come before the kingdom, had put things in the wrong order. He had stirred political activism in the belief that force and violence were equated with righteousness. Jesus' message had been (in the Sermon on the Mount, 5.38-48) that the kingdom of heaven comes about by God's grace and reflected love. To try to bring in the kingdom by force is to violate it.