



# The Benefice of Upper Wensleydale 'Church in the Home'



December 2025 & January 2026

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## From the Vicarage

Sitting in the Vicarage study with Sarah and Steph in July to begin planning Christmas did seem rather strange but we were determined that this year, we would be in control of the diary rather than the diary controlling us. Ha! As Robbie Burns famously wrote ... 'The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men, Gang aft agley'.

It's another wonderfully rich and varied Advent and Christmas season across the Benefice and I certainly hope that you are able to enter into some of what is on offer to help you in your preparation, celebration and worship. We have Candlelit Communion, Nativity Plays, Christingle's, Carol Concerts, Outdoor Community Singing, a Family Film Afternoon, the Askrigg Christmas Tree Festival filled with 7 days of different events, Midnight Communion on Christmas Eve and our joyful Christmas Day Celebration to name but a few. I look forward to welcoming you (and the guests that you invite along with you) to these different opportunities of encounter.

But before the celebration we have the time of preparation of Advent. I remember once being told that if I arrive at Christmas exhausted then it's a sure sign that I haven't used the time of Advent appropriately. Oh dear ... back to Robbie Burns again!

This newsletter is to cover the months of December and January so it is full of information which I hope that you will find informative and useful.

The Diocese said goodbye to Bishop Nick on Sunday Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> at a special service of thanksgiving in Ripon Cathedral. It was an emotional occasion filled with music and prayer, a message from Bishop Nick and tributes to his lengthy time of ministry across the nation and overseas from a wide range of speakers including the Archbishop of York and the Archbishop of Sudan.

As we look to our celebration of the human birth of our Heavenly King, our world and our nation often seems as fractured and as broken as it was 2000 years ago but Bishop Nick reminded us of the glorious hope we have in Christ Jesus.

*"We are not people of despair, but people of hope, and we face our future with a vision for what it should be, and the imagination to make it so. God is the wide space for our hope."*

Last year I ran a series of Tuesday morning Advent Bible studies investigating the message of preparation and salvation: When did it all begin? Why did it all begin? What did it all begin? And *How* does it all begin? The message of God's Love for us all is that He wrapped His hand around a fragile humanity and, just as Mary couldn't keep her eyes off Jesus, so our Heavenly Father cannot and will not take His eyes off us. So great is His Love.

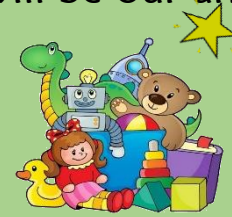
Let's allow the Christ child in the manger to wrap His love around our hearts this Christmas.  
From Sarah and myself: May you know the joy of Christ this Christmas!

Rev Dave

The next 'Gathering' will be on **Sunday 7 December** at 10:30am at St Margaret's in Hawes and will be our annual:



## Toy Service



An opportunity to bring a new unwrapped toy / book to bless a child and family in need of some help this Christmas.

*Be a Blessing – Be Encouraged – Be Church*

easyfundraising

Win daily donations  
right up to *Christmas!*

£100+ each day  
from 8-21 December

This Advent, our funding partner **easyfundraising** is spreading festive cheer with its *Christmas Crackers* competition (8–21 Dec). Each day, our Benefice could win a £100 or £200 donation—a wonderful boost for our mission and ministry as we enter the new year!

From 8–21 Dec, simply visit easyfundraising, find the Christmas Cracker, and click it daily for a chance to win. Every click counts, so we invite all our church family to join in. And while you're there, remember: shopping via easyfundraising with 8,000+ retailers (including M&S, Boots, John Lewis, Argos, and more) raises free donations for our churches at no extra cost. Information was contained in last month's newsletter on how to sign up, but it is very easy – simply go to [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://easyfundraising.org.uk) and create an account for yourself. When it comes to naming where you would like your donations to go, search for Upper Wensleydale Benefice.



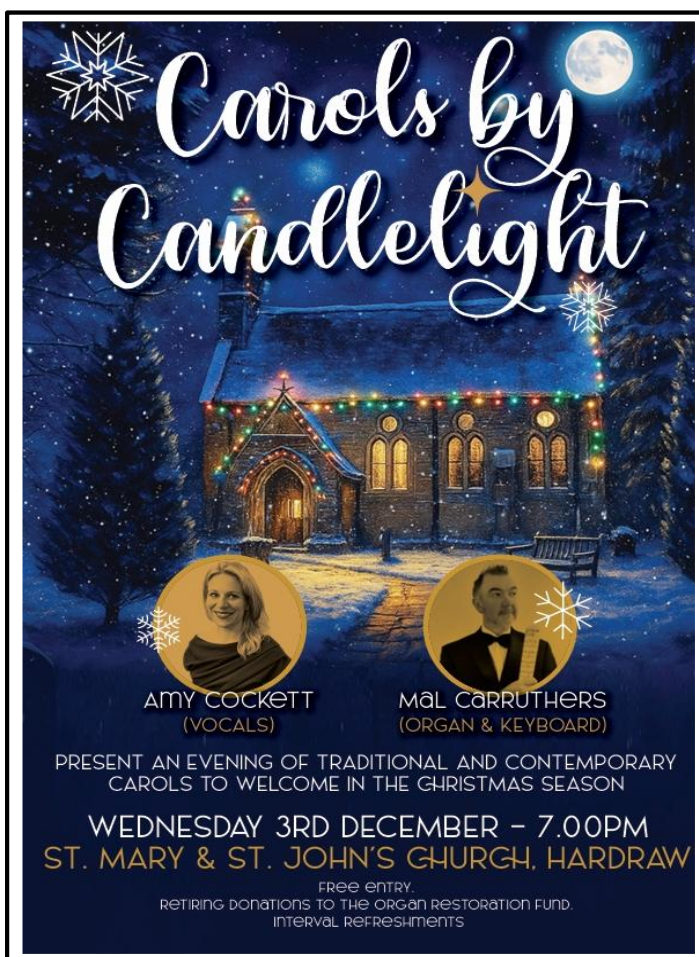
### SUNFLOWERS

Last month we printed some pictures of sunflowers grown from the seeds that Dave gave out at a Gathering Service earlier this year. We challenged you to send us photos of any others grown from these seeds.

This photo shows two huge sunflowers grown from the seeds by Mal and Karen up at Skelgill, near Askrigg.







# Carols by Candlelight

AMY COCKETT  
(VOCALS)

MAL CARRUTHERS  
(ORGAN & KEYBOARD)

PRESENT AN EVENING OF TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY CAROLS TO WELCOME IN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

**WEDNESDAY 3RD DECEMBER - 7.00PM**  
**ST. MARY & ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, HARDRAW**

Free entry.  
RETIRING DONATIONS TO THE ORGAN RESTORATION FUND.  
INTERVAL REFRESHMENTS



## ST OSWALD'S CHURCH CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 5pm**  
Community Christingle Service and Christmas Tree Festival light big switch on.

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm**  
'A Christmas Cracker' - Concert featuring Mal Carruthers, Amy Cockett, Askrigg Handbells and Rev Dave. Refreshments

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 4-6pm**  
Have a Hot Chocolate and cake, or Mulled Wine and a mince pie whilst you wander amongst the trees

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December 7.30pm**  
An Evening of Christmas Music - Askrigg Ladies Sing for Pleasure with guests from the East Witton Male Voice Choir and carols for all - Refreshments Available

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December 12-2pm**  
Come and enjoy a Soup Lunch

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December 6-8pm**  
View the Christmas Trees whilst listening to Mal Carruthers playing music on the Church Organ. Refreshments Available

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 5pm**  
Candlelight Evening Prayer

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December at 9am**  
Book of Common Prayer Communion

**Christmas Eve**  
'Carols on the Cobbles' at 5pm  
Holy Communion at 11.30pm



## THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS

*Saturday Dec 6<sup>th</sup>*  
**2-3:30pm**

**A start to the Festive Season**

**Mal Carruthers & Amy Cockett**  
Organ *With* Vocals  
Festive Refreshments *at 2.15* Festive Refreshments

**St Margaret's Church: Hawes**

Followed by Carols with  
Hawes Silver Band and a visit from  
Santa in the Market Square!

**Free Admission:** Donations to the  
Salvation Army Xmas Appeal

## UPPER WENSLEYDALE BENEFICE AT CHRISTMAS

There are many exciting things happening during the Advent and Christmas periods, so instead of just trying to put them all in the calendar (which we have done as well at the end of the newsletter!), we thought it might be easier to list them all out in greater detail so that you can better plan your advent season.

This page has some of the posters that you will see across the Benefice and the detailed calendar begins on the next page.

We look forward to seeing you at some of our events.

## WEDNESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER

St Mary & St John's Church, Hardraw at 7pm

**Carols by Candlelight**, a concert of traditional and contemporary carols to welcome in the Christmas Season, featuring Mal Carruthers (organ and keyboard) and Amy Cockett (vocals). The concert is free but there will be a retiring collection for the Organ Restoration Fund. Interval with refreshments.



## SATURDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

Village Hall, Askrigg 10am to noon

**St Oswald's Church Coffee Morning** in aid of the Christmas Tree Festival. Entry fee of £2.50 gives access to unlimited tea or coffee and scones with jam and cream. In addition, there is a cake stall, with goodies to eat in or take away, a jigsaw stall and tombola.

St Margaret's Church, Hawes 2pm to 3.30pm

**The Magic of Christmas Concert** with Mal Carruthers on the organ, Amy Cockett on vocals and featuring Rev Dave. A great way to start the Christmas Season. There will be festive refreshments, and the concert will finish in time for you to make your way up to the Market Square for the Hawes Silver Band carols and Santa's visit.

## SUNDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

St Margaret's Church, Hawes, 10.30am

**The Gathering – Toy Service.** Family Benefice Service with the Salvation Army. Donations of new toys (unwrapped please) which the Salvation Army will distribute to families over the Christmas period.

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg from 2-4pm

**Christmas Memorial** – The sense of loss we feel through bereavement can be intensified at this time of year. All are invited to remember their loved ones in a seasonal way – light a candle in their memory, leave a named star on our tree, have some sacred space to remember, reflect and pray.

## SUNDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER



St Mary & St John's Church, Hardraw, 10.30am

**Benefice Holy Communion**

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 5pm

**Community Christingle Service and Christmas Tree Festival lights Switch On.** Please arrive at least 20 mins early if you wish to make a Christingle.

## MONDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 7pm

**'A Christmas Cracker'** – Concert featuring Mal Carruthers, Amy Cockett, Askrigg Handbells and Rev Dave. Refreshments available

## TUESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 4-6pm

Have a **hot chocolate or mulled wine** and a mince pie as you wander amongst the decorated trees inside and outside the building



## WEDNESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 7.30pm

**An Evening of Christmas Music** with Askrigg Ladies Sing for Pleasure with guests from the East Witton Male Voice Choir – includes carols for all. Refreshments available.

## THURSDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 12-2pm

Come and enjoy a **soup lunch** followed by pudding surrounded by the Christmas Trees

The Wensleydale Pantry, 7pm

**Benefice Carvery Dinner.** Spaces still available – contact Graham DiDuca

## FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 6-8pm

Walk amongst the decorated trees whilst listening to **Mal Carruthers playing music on the church organ.** Refreshments available.

## SATURDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

St Margaret's Church, Hawes, 2pm

**Family film afternoon** in the church. A family Christmas film favourite - 'Arthur Christmas'

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 5pm

**Evening Prayer by candlelight**

## SUNDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 9am

**BCP Holy Communion Service**

St Margaret's Church, Hawes, 10.30am

**Family Nativity Service,** featuring the children from the Benefice

## CHRISTMAS EVE

St Matthew's Church, Stalling Busk, 3pm

**Communion with carols**

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 5pm

**Community Carols on the Cobbles** outside the church with a visit from Father Christmas

St Margaret's Church, Hawes, 7pm

**Community Carols,** not in the church, but in the Market Square.

St Margaret's Church, Hawes, 9pm

**Midnight in Bethlehem Communion Service**

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 11.30pm

**Holy Communion Service**



# CHRISTMAS DAY

St Mary & St John's Church, Hardraw, 10.30am

**Benefice Christmas Family Celebration**

## SUNDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

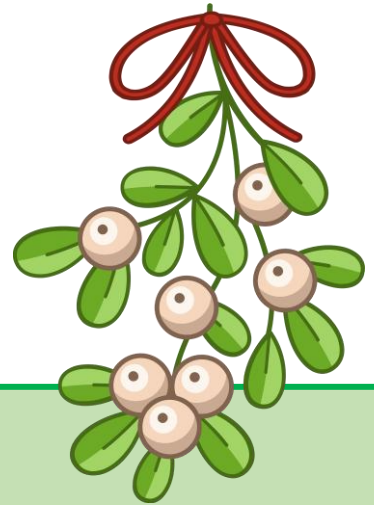
St Margaret's Church, Hawes, 10.30am

**Benefice Holy Communion Service**

## SUNDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY

St Oswald's Church, Askrigg, 10.30am

**The Gathering – Benefice Family Service**



### Advent Wreaths

Around the Benefice your wardens and members of the church family have been getting ready for the start of Advent by creating Advent Wreaths for our four buildings.

The Advent wreath first appeared in Germany in 1839. A Lutheran minister working at a mission for children created a wreath out of the wheel of a cart. He placed twenty small red candles and four large white candles inside the ring. The red candles were lit on weekdays and the four white candles were lit on Sundays.

Eventually, the Advent wreath was created out of evergreens, symbolizing everlasting life in the midst of winter and death. The circle reminds us of God's unending love and the eternal life He makes possible. Advent candles are often nestled in the evergreen wreath. Additional decorations, like holly and berries, are sometimes added. Their red colour points ahead to Jesus' sacrifice and death. Pinecones can symbolize the new life that Jesus brings through His resurrection.

The most common Advent wreath tradition involves four candles. A new candle is lit on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. Different colours are often used to represent the principal themes of hope, faith, joy, peace and love or they may be used to remind us of important characters in the advent journey – the patriarchs, the prophets and John the Baptist are frequently represented with purple or red candles. Mary the mother of Jesus with a pink candle and for the arrival of Jesus on Christmas Day a white candle is used.

Our Sunday worship will begin with a prayer reminding us of the theme or person for that particular day.



# Advent

*A Season of Hope  
& Expectation*

For many Christians unfamiliar with the liturgical year, there may be some confusion surrounding the meaning of the Advent season. Some people may know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and think that it serves as an anticipation of Christ's birth in the season leading up to Christmas. This is part of the story, but there's much more to Advent than that.

Advent is a time of looking forward and a time of looking back. Looking *back* to the beginning of God's narrative of redemption for the world and *forward* to His return in glory. The Patriarchs heard God's call and followed. The Prophet's shared their dreams and visions that others might follow. The history of the chosen people is full of stark contrasts – triumph and disaster, freedom and slavery, homeland and exile.

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "Arrival."

It is believed that during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany. During this season of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for this celebration. Originally, there was little connection between Advent and Christmas.

By the 6<sup>th</sup> century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. The "arrival" they had in mind however, was not Christ's first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but rather his *second* as the judge of the world. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was explicitly linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas.

Advent also creates an opportunity for us to pause and reflect on the BIG issues of life: the 'four last things': death, judgement, Heaven, hell.

Today, the season of Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. It's a season of expectation and preparation. A time of looking *back* on the promises of God that were fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ but also in looking *forward* to the promises that are yet to come and of His return in glory. It's so easy for us to become lost in the busyness of the preparation for Christmas Day that we can forget these things and lose sight of the joy that there is in walking closely with the Lord along the way.

You have often heard me extend the invitation to 'Have a Coffee with the Lord', so this Advent, why not plan in some essential down time to do precisely that?

Put on some music, light a candle and spend some time with the one who loves you and longs to spend some quality time *with* you.

**Prayer:** *Come Holy Spirit as we journey together this Advent. May our longing for Christ find fresh fulfilment, our waiting on Christ reveal new insight and our faith in Christ generate new strength and Hope in God's story of Salvation.*

## FROM THE BENEFICE CALENDAR



### Baptisms

**8<sup>th</sup> November (By Immersion in Semerwater)**

**Olivia Birch and Delani Channer**

### Funerals

**14 November**

**William Porter**

**Askrigg**

**Stay Connected** and make the most of the Bible teaching taking place across the Benefice.

### Search for:

**'Rev Dave from Wensleydale'**

Latest episodes include:

Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>: 'Know Who You Are' – All Saints Sunday

Nov 9<sup>th</sup>: 'Can You Hack It?' - Remembrance

Nov 23<sup>rd</sup>: 'Make the Switch' – 'Christ the King'

Nov 30<sup>th</sup>: 'Are you ready?' – Advent Sunday

Available on Apple podcasts and Spotify



### Join us for Evening Prayer

For some time now we have been offering the opportunity of sharing in a service of Afternoon/ Evening Prayer by telephone in your own home. It is very simple to join in. I am confident that there are many more people in the upper dale who would benefit from joining with us. You may be one of them, or you may know someone who would appreciate the chance to do so. If this is the case, then follow the instructions below and we look forward to welcoming you at 4pm on a Sunday afternoon.

As 4pm approaches, call this number **03330 164757**. You will then be asked to enter the room number **893 277 00#** and the **PIN 2772#**. Then you are in! Say hello, sit quietly, and join in with the half an hour service of prayer and reflection





# Wensleydale Filling Station



Thornborough Hall, Leyburn

Friday 12th December 2025

Advent and Christmas celebration

Worship led by Dave and Sarah Clark



## Semerwater Baptisms: Saturday November 8<sup>th</sup>

The baptisms of Delani Channer and Olivia Birch took place on a cool but dry November Saturday. We've had 8 baptisms in the lake in the last 5 years and each one has been a very special occasion. This was, however, the first time we've done it with waves! My thanks to the courageous 'Immersion Assistants': Ellie and Stephanie Durrant in the morning and Margaret Iveson and Miriam Cloughton in the afternoon.





# Upper Wensleydale Benefice Services

## December 2025

	St Mary & St John's, Hardraw 9.00am	St Margaret's, Hawes 10.30am	St Oswald's, Askrigg 10.30am	St Matthew's, Stalling Busk 2.30pm	
3 Dec	Carols by Candlelight Concert 7pm				
5 Dec	Sycamore Hall – Communion Service in the lounge – 10am				
6 Dec		Magic of Christmas Concert 2-3.30pm	Coffee Morning in Village Hall 10- 12 noon		
7 Dec	The Gathering - Benefice Family Toy Service St Margaret's Church, Hawes at 10.30am				Evening prayer by telephone
	Christmas Memorial at St Oswald's Church, Askrigg From 2pm -4pm				
14 Dec	Benefice Holy Communion at 10.30am		Community Christingle & Christmas Tree Festival Big Switch On 5pm		Evening prayer by telephone
15-19 Dec			Various events as part of Christmas Tree Festival – see article		
20 Dec		Family Film Afternoon 2pm	Candlelit Evening Prayer 5pm		
21 Dec		Family Nativity Service	BCP Holy Communion 9am		Evening prayer by telephone
Christmas Eve		Carols in the Market Square 7pm  Midnight in Bethlehem Communion 9pm	Carols on the Cobbles 5pm  Holy Communion 11.30pm	Carols 3pm	
Christmas Day	Benefice Christmas Family Communion St Mary & St John's Church, Hardraw at 10.30am				
28 Dec	Benefice Holy Communion St Margaret's Church, Hawes at 10.30am				Evening prayer by telephone



## Upper Wensleydale Benefice Services

### January 2026

	<b>St Mary &amp; St John's, Hardraw 9.00am</b>	<b>St Margaret's, Hawes 10.30am</b>	<b>St Oswald's, Askrigg 10.30am</b>	<b>St Matthew's, Stalling Busk 2.30pm</b>	
<b>4 Jan</b>	<b>The Gathering - Benefice Family Service</b> <b>St Oswald's Church, Askrigg at 10.30am</b>				Evening prayer by telephone
<b>9 Jan</b>	<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px;"> <b>Sycamore Hall – Communion Service in the lounge – 10am</b> </div>				
<b>11 Jan</b>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	Café Style	12.30 Soup followed by Communion	Evening prayer by telephone
<b>18 Jan</b>	Holy Communion	Family Service	Morning Prayer		Evening prayer by telephone
<b>25 Jan</b>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Afternoon Prayer Pathfinders and Explorers	Evening prayer by telephone

#### Prayer suggestions for December and January

- For our new archbishop as she prepares to take office
- For peace across the world, particularly in those areas where there is war
- For those we will be bringing to Christmas events, that their hearts may be open

**Rev Dave Clark**

**The Vicarage, Burtsett Road, Hawes, DL8 3NP**

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Administrator: Stephanie Durrant (work hours 1-5pm Tuesdays and Thursdays)