

From the Vicar - December 2025

Advent begins on Sunday 30th November, when we are bidding farewell to Bishop Humphrey and Emma Southern at our Benefice Eucharist in All Saints' Church.

Later that day the choir of Ripon College Cuddesdon join us for an Advent Carol Service, also in All Saints' Church. Refreshments are being served after both services, and villagers from around the Benefice are joining us.

Advent is a season for watching and waiting, as we wait and prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. At Carol Services and Midnight Mass, we often hear the beautiful prologue, or beginning, of John's Gospel:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being, what has come into being. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world...”

Those words send shivers down my spine, especially when read by candlelight, in a darkened church.

In Advent, we wait for the coming of the Lord, who brings both life and light. We watch, expectantly – like a sentry, on a rooftop, watching for the first glimmer of light from a distant beacon.

This idea of the light of Christ appearing gradually, like the light from beacons spreading from one hill-top to another, is picked up in Malcolm Guite's sonnet O Oriens:

E vidi lume in forme de riviera Paradiso XXX; 61

First light and then first lines along the east
To touch and brush a sheen of light on water
As though behind the sky itself they traced

The shift and shimmer of another river
Flowing unbidden from its hidden source;
The Day-Spring, the eternal Prima Vera.

Blake saw it too. Dante and Beatrice
Are bathing in it now, away upstream...
So every trace of light begins a grace

In me, a beckoning. The smallest gleam
Is somehow a beginning and a calling;
“Sleeper awake, the darkness was a dream

For you will see the Dayspring at your waking,
Beyond your long last line the dawn is breaking”.

I hope and pray that, this Advent, you might see signs of light in the
darkness, to remind you of the coming of Emmanuel – God with us –
the God who left his heavenly throne to pitch his tent among us, so

that we might know God, and might know his great love for us and for the world.

Wishing you a peaceful and blessed Advent, a joyful Christmas, and a happy and healthy New Year.

Revd Tom x