



The Parish of Moseley

St Mary's & St Anne's



Parish of Moseley - First Sunday of Advent

Our Services for the First Sunday of Advent: 3rd December 2023

- 8.00am - Holy Communion at St Mary's (BCP)
- 10.00am - Sung Eucharist at St Mary's
- 11.00am - Sung Eucharist at St Anne's
- 6.30pm - Service of Readings and Music for Advent

Parish Breakfast will follow the 8am service at St Mary's. All are welcome.

Readings for the First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64.1–9 and Mark 13.24–37

Thought for the Day by Phil Hall

For most of us, particularly children, Advent is a time of great expectation as we eagerly look forward to celebrating Nativity, the Christian festival of Christ's birth. Christian theology considers Advent Sunday as the first of four Sundays, in the first season of the church's liturgical year. In Christian culture Advent - adopted from Latin *adventus* "coming, arrival" - signifies the expectant waiting of the Nativity of Christ at Christmas, along with preparation for the return of Christ at the Second Coming. Uniquely, in the sequence of the four Sundays in Advent, the first Sunday is

simply referred to as 'Advent Sunday' whereas the other three Sundays are considered 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sunday in Advent, respectively.

And yet the two readings for Advent Sunday, Isaiah 64. 1-9 and Mark 13. 24-37 start off suggesting something entirely different; something unexpected; something to think about. Both readings paint a different, but similar picture of 'the heavens' warning all of us, in vivid, descriptive words, about the Son of Man coming with great power and glory.

Isaiah 64.1 uses the words "...rend the heavens and come down that the mountains would tremble before you!". Mark 13. 24/25 prefers "...The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the skies and the heavenly bodies will be shaken". It is as if each reading depicts a picture of pending doom and gloom.

In my view they do not; they simply portray a scenario, a warning of what will happen if we do not look for, listen to, and follow, Christ's example. At Mark 13. 27 an unexpected 'beam of light' appears out of all this gloom, reassuring us all of the wonder of following Christ. "...And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens...". This small, poignant section particularly caught my eye because I know it is true, absolutely true.

I feel sure that many of us believe in Heaven, in some form or other, but how many of us have actual seen Heaven? I have; and Advent, particularly early Advent always, but always, brings that bitter-sweet memory to mind.

I am one of the very, very lucky people on earth who has seen and can recall, with beautiful, vivid clarity, the wonderful glory of Heaven. It was not just a passing view of Heaven from a jet window but a wonderful, glorious, eyes-open-wide, never-to-miss spectacle of something almost too beautiful and too simple to describe.

It was one evening, early December 1955, that I noticed a gentle, white mist in the corner of my bedroom; the bedroom I had shared with Derek, my 13 year old brother. Derek had died from Asian flu on the morning of the 5th December 1955, just a few days earlier.

As this white mist gradually enveloped me, I saw two beautiful, tall angels, with long, slender wings standing at the bottom of the stairway. The stairway swept upwards and right towards Heaven. Between the two angels was Derek with both his hands holding the angels, one in each hand. He was in his grey school uniform; short trousers, woolly pullover and socks down round his ankles. It was as if they were all waiting for me to arrive and see them standing there before, without even looking back, they all set off up the staircase. I watched them for what seemed a long, long time until, sweeping gracefully to the right, they entered Heaven. It seemed like an eternity before the staircase faded away, the mist gradually dispersed and I was alone in my bedroom.

It was absolutely amazing, so beautiful and so wonderful to have witnessed. I did not feel frightened or lonely; in fact I felt so happy that Derek was no longer suffering and was now going up to Heaven. I just lay there on my bed, staring into the mist until it disappeared completely and I fell asleep. Although I recall clearly the first snow of winter - the day after Derek was buried - I have no recollection of Christmas 1955, less than two weeks later, nor Christmas in any form, for many, many, many years after that vision, it did not change my belief in Christ one iota.

With hindsight I believe it was a calling for me to put my faith in Christ and that I have; a faith which has and will continue to guide me through my darkest moments. I am constantly aware of Christ's presence in and around me - even though I do question it at times - and with that wonderful, warm feeling of a contented life, how can I not look forward with great happiness and joyful expectation to celebrating a wonderful, happy Christmas amongst my many fellow Christians and other friends.

Advent Light

Are we God's Advent travellers?
Like Mary, journeying to Elizabeth.
Carrying within her womb
with deep love and wonder
the God-given promised child,
Jesus,
The Saviour of the World,
who would pierce her heart with pain.
As he shouldered the Earthly sins
upon the Cross,
creating Holy Light
For all our journeys, then and now.
Do we feel that enveloping wonder?
That unfailing guidance?
Are we recharged and energised
to travel on?
Caring for our modern traveller -
the helpless, suffering, refugee.
Fight right causes.
Love our neighbours.
Banish crippling egos
Revere nature in all its glory.
And in the quiet recesses of our souls
build our God-given foundations for life eternal,
moving step by step, now and into the future,
by action, love and prayer.
Surrounded with the love, peace and joy
of the everlasting Advent Light

Future Services

Sunday 10th December - Second Sunday of Advent

- 8.00am - Holy Communion at St Mary's
- 10.00am - Nativity at St Mary's
- 5.00pm - Community Carol Service at St Anne's

Please note there is no 11am service at St Anne's and no evening service at St Mary's.

Sunday 17th December - Third Sunday of Advent

- 8.00am - Holy Communion at St Mary's (BCP)
- 10.00am - Sung Eucharist at St Mary's
- 11.00am - Sung Eucharist at St Anne's
- 6.30pm - Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at St Mary's

Our Regular Worship

- Details of our regular pattern of worship can be found on the Services page of our website [here](#).
 - Details of how the pattern relates to Children's Worship can be found on the Children and Youth page of our website [here](#).
 - Details of specific services can continue to be found in the [Calendar](#).
 - **Morning Prayer** is at 9.10am in the Lady Chapel at St Mary's on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday and at 9.10am in St Anne's on Tuesday. **Please note there will be no Morning Prayer on 28th, 29th and 30th November.**
 - The Thursday **Midweek Communion** service is at 12.15pm in the Lady Chapel at St Mary's.
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Notices

Christmas Fair

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the Christmas Fair such a success.

Whether it was helping the day before, setting up a stall, helping on the day, tidying up or counting money it was a real team effort. We raised £2274.21 which is a super total so thank you all.

Prayer During Communion - Sunday 3rd December

On the first Sunday of each month, we offer the opportunity for individual prayer requests to be heard during the 10.00am service at St Mary's and directly after the 11.00am Communion at St Anne's.

Anyone can come with requests either for themselves or for others. At St Mary's this will happen in the bell-ringing chamber and at St Anne's in the Prayer Corner. There will be one or two people available to pray with you - members of the Pastoral Committee and licensed worship leaders. If anyone requires additional time, there will be an opportunity for further prayer and pastoral care.

Advent Prayer Calendar

Can you take a moment each day during Advent to pray? There are a few copies of this year's Advent Prayer Calendar available on each welcome desk, or you can download a copy [here](#).

Advent Reflection Group - Trees

To run alongside our Christmas Tree Festival, we will be holding six Advent sessions on the theme of trees, led by different members of our Discipleship Team. Each Tuesday evening session will then be repeated on Thursday mornings. This also supports our working towards our Silver Eco Award.

The evening sessions will be from 7.30-9.0pm in the West Room and Thursday Thinkers sessions will be from 10.30am until 12.00noon also in the West Room. All welcome and refreshments served. The remaining Tuesday dates are as follows:

- 5th December
- 12th December

The remaining Thursday Thinkers dates are:

- 7th December
- 14th December

St Mary's Wins Bronze Eco Church Award

We are delighted to have received the Bronze Eco Church Award in recognition of our efforts to care for God's earth. We are now looking for volunteers to form a group to work towards the silver award. If you are interested please contact the office on office@moseleychurch.org.uk.

Christmas Tree Festival

We will be hosting a Christmas Tree Festival from 7th-10th December at St Mary's Church with a service of blessing on Thursday 7th at 6pm at St Mary's.

Individuals, community groups and businesses are invited to submit a tree (any size up to 5ft). You can decorate the tree in an appropriate way but there isn't a theme so you can use the tree to advertise a business or group.

Please register your tree at office@moseleychurch.org.uk and bring your tree anytime between 10.00am-4.0pm on Wednesday 6th December at St Mary's Church. There is an optional £10 donation to church charities.

Volunteer stewards needed for the Christmas Tree Festival - can you help?

We are still needing volunteers to offer 2 hour slots to steward in church on

- Wednesday 6th December 2.00pm-3.00pm,
- Friday afternoon 2.0pm-4.0pm,
- Saturday from 12.00-2.0pm
- Sunday afternoon 2.0pm-4.0pm

Please contact us on office@moseleychurch.org.uk or call on 0121 449 2243 if you can help.

Blue Christmas

On Saturday 9th December at 4pm we will be holding a short service of reflection called Blue Christmas for anyone who isn't finding the festive season easy. We are especially thinking of those who might be grieving for whatever reason, or those of us who find the winter time and longer nights difficult. Blue Christmas will be for about 30-40 minutes in the Lady Chapel at St Mary's and will be followed by a chance to chat and find quiet companionship over hot drinks and homemade cake in the West Room. The service and space afterwards are open to everyone, regardless of faith. Please do feel welcome to come.

Christmas Flowers - Saturday 16th December

We will be decorating St Mary's church for Christmas on 16th December. Can you help? If you can, please come to church at 9.30am. Greenery for displays would be much appreciated.

Brass Band of Central England

The Brass Band of Central England presents "Sounds of Christmas" - 3.30 pm, Saturday 16th December at St Mary's Church.

You can't beat the sounds of Christmas music played by a full brass band. Get into the Christmas spirit at this afternoon concert!

Tickets £12, concessions £10. Available online [here](#) or phone 07732 353599. Limited tickets available on the door.

Eco Church - Christmas Cards this Year

Our Parish has achieved a Bronze Eco Church Award which is a brilliant initiative to encourage our community to think around different areas where we could safeguard and celebrate our planet. We are now working towards our silver award. If you would like to be involved in helping us to achieve this, please contact the Church Office.

In accordance with our Eco Church status and to save paper, we are encouraging members of our church to send ONE card to everyone in the church this year. You can still donate to a chosen charity if this is a way you give money. As we are holding a Christmas Tree Festival in early December we are encouraging everyone to find cards with trees on them or an environmental theme to them. We will have a board designated to your card so everyone can enjoy them.

Heating at St Mary's

The heating at St Mary's is currently broken. The installation of a new boiler is in progress but please wrap up warmly in the meantime.

Funeral of Revd Nick Ball.

Sadly we reported last week the death of Revd Nick Ball, former curate of St Mary's and Vicar of St Peter's Hall Green. Revd Nick's funeral will be on Thursday 21st December at 12:15pm at St. James Church, Shirley (B90 2AX), followed by committal at Robin Hood Crematorium, Solihull. All who wish to attend will be warmly welcomed.

£130 for our Church

Take out a home insurance policy with Ecclesiastical and they will donate £130 to our church. To find out more, please contact Ecclesiastical on 0800 7830 130 and quote TRUSTPST or go to ecclesiastical.com/trust130.

Stewardship

Our parish is facing significant financial challenges with a growing deficit which a small team are seeking to redress. However, **stewardship** (the giving of time, talents and financial means) is about us all. On Sunday 4th June we focussed on this in our Sunday services at both St Mary's and St Anne's. Information is available on the welcome desk.

You may also have noticed some notices with **QR codes around the buildings**. This can be an easy and quick way to donate to the church through 'the collection' when you come to church or are visiting. Please do make use of these on an occasional or more regular basis in our new 'cashless' society. Thank you so much - Magdalen.

This week in the Parish

We continue to pray for:

Cathie Carey and family, Tony Sheppard, Mike Carter, Sylvia Gold, Jeanette Riddick, William George, Ruth Carter, Jon Terry, Rachel McLeod, Sheila Perks, Laurie Flood and Elisabeth Leicester.

Souls of the Departed: Revd Nick Ball.

The Parish also prays and gives thanks for:

- Those in our congregations who work in retail and hospitality, especially in these busy weeks leading up to Christmas.

Church of England Birmingham Praying Together: The current edition is [here](#).

We celebrate the Birthdays of: Mick Perrier, Philip Holloway, Ivy Groves, Helen Collett and Peter Alcock.
