The Grapevine
December 2026

Issue 92

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

St Paul's Chichester
Sanctuary Hospitality Spiritual Encounter

www.StPaulsChichester.org

Contact Information

St Paul's Chichester
Sanctuary Hospitality Spiritual Encounter

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The Next Issue of The Grapevine

The deadline for January Grapevine is 2pm Tuesday 5th January.
Copy can be submitted by email to office@stpaulschichester.org
or as hardcopy to the office.
The January issue which will be published on Sunday 10th January.
The February issue which will be published on Sunday 31st January

The Rector's Letter - From Canon Paul
The Waiting of Advent

When it comes to writing an article for a newsletter at this time of year it is incredibly tempting to focus on Christmas. But although there will be the inevitable flurry of carol services and school nativities before Christmas Day itself, most of December is the season of Advent, and so the beginning of a new Church year. From that point of view, I should probably be wishing you all a very Happy New Year!

If we are honest December can be a frenetic month. For many of us November was a month of denial, despite the decorations in the shops and the adverts on TV that make us tut because they seem to get earlier every year. We know that many of us seem to have too many Christmas Cards to write (if we still send them!) and gifts to wrap and get off in the post. For others there are excited children to try keep calm as the end of the school term gets nearer.

But for others December can bring more negative feelings. If we have lost someone we loved dearly, or if our family are far away and we can't be with them this year, we might prefer that Christmas either didn't arrive or that it is over as quickly as possible.

However December makes us feel, our natural impatience and the frustration of not feeling we have enough time to get things done, can get in the way of us thinking about what Christmas is all about. And our reluctance to wait can also prevent us from looking forward to Christmas Day itself.

One of my favourite Advent books picks up on this theme of waiting. "The meaning is in the waiting; The Spirit of Advent." By Dr Paula Gooder invites us, in the company of well-known biblical characters, to take the themes from the Sundays of Advent and use them to help us learn what it means to wait, both in our daily lives and in our relationship with God. At the end of her initial reflection on waiting, Dr Gooder writes……. *"Advent, then, calls us into a state of active waiting; a state that recognizes and embraces the glimmers of God's presence in the world, that recalls and celebrates God's historic yet ever present actions and*

that speaks the truth about the almost-but-not-quite nature of our Christian living……

Most of all, Advent summons us to the present moment, to a still, yet active, a tranquil yet steadfast commitment to the life we live now…….”

We live in a fast-paced society. Life can be hectic, especially at this time of year when we not only find that there is too much to do, but we also find that the queues seem even longer than usual! But perhaps we might discover that December can be more enriching if we tried, each day to celebrate Advent. We might do this by lingering over an activity we enjoy, we might do it by pausing for a few moments and being thankful and grateful for the present moment. It’s not easy of course. But then waiting never is.

Jan and I wish you all a wonderful Advent journey, and a fantastic Christmas and New year when they come.

With every blessing

Canon Paul

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

In Advent, we spend time waiting and preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Challenge:

Try counting all the times you have to wait for something today. Maybe you could pray today’s prayer while you wait!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, please fill us with joy as we wait for you this Advent. Help me to get ready to celebrate your birth at Christmas. Amen.

Find all 24 Advent Activity and Colouring Sheets plus daily reflections for teens and adults via cofe.io/TheGiftOfChristmas

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Based on Advent from A to Z (Church House Publishing, 2026) Illustrations by Cesar @ Fiverr, reflections by Imogen Ball, Philip North and Andrew Zinni. © The Archbishops Council 2026.

ADVENT ACTIVITY AND COLOURING SHEET

1 December

A IS FOR ADVENT

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’

John 1.1



'Let us pray……'

Prayer Focus for December

- The Holy Land, for peace with justice and reconciliation.
- Families with young children.
- The homeless and the work of
    - Four Streets
    - Chichester Heart for the Homeless
    - Stonepillow.
- Chichester Foodbank.
- Those suffering with mental illness and for the work of Confide.

Prayer for the month

Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God.
Amen.

The prayers and collects provided by both the Book of Common Prayer, and Common Worship, for the seasons of Advent and Christmas are some of the most beautiful prayers the Church of England has. This particular collect is one of the alternative collects that can be used for Christmas Day. For me it creates a wonderful image of awe and wonder. Not only are we so overjoyed at the birth of Jesus that we kneel in praise; we are also drawn to the beautiful image of heaven and earth touching each other. It's a prayer that describes the liminal space, the threshold between the world as it is, and the world touched by God through the birth of Jesus. And it's a prayer that invites us to worship him. As we look toward Christmas this year, I commend it to you for your own prayers.

F3A

F3A meets on the third Tuesday of the month in the Parish Centre. Our meetings will commence at 2.30pm, with tea and coffee served from 2.15pm. We will finish by 3.30pm. Everybody 60 and over will be very welcome. The topic for December will be ***Christmas, past and present.*** Do join us on Tuesday 15th December for a cuppa and friendly discussion.
Mary Ashwin 786501

Ladies' Group

St Paul's Ladies' Group usually meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at 2.30pm in the Parish Centre. Everyone is welcome at all of our meetings, including men. Here are the meetings for the Ladies Group for December:-

9th Dec ***Christmas party***. Please bring food for a finger buffet and a wrapped present up to the value of £5.00

Don't forget your contributions to the Foodbank. Thank you
Valerie Sargeant 01243 781998

Afternoon Tea 3-5pm, Sunday 6th December

Everyone is warmly invited to join us for afternoon tea at St. Paul's parish centre on the first Sunday of every month. No cost or pre-booking required. Come and enjoy tea and cakes with friendly company.
We conclude our afternoon with a short service of Evening Prayer using the traditional language of the Book of Common Prayer.
For information contact Margaret Phillips 527961 or Phyllis Nicholls 780454.

From Margaret and Phyllis

A big **thank you** to all of our loyal people who came to the afternoon teas.
It is with regret that after 14 years and over two thousand teas given, we have decided that Sunday 6 th December will be the last afternoon. However there will be an afternoon tea beginning in February (more information in next month's Grapevine). Special thanks to those who led the evening prayers and to all who helped with the washing-up and clearing tables. Also very grateful thanks to

Margaret Heald for making her wonderful and delicious cake every month. It has all been very friendly and delightful.
Margaret and Phyllis.

Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union meets on Thursday 17th December at 11am in St Paul's church after the 10am Eucharist. We invite you to join us for an Advent Meditation led by Canon John Green, former Royal Navy Chaplain and now Priest in charge of the joint benefice which includes Bignor and Barlavington.

Heather Hyde 07949 799 415

Carol Singing Outside the Festival Theatre

We will be singing outside the theatre again this year. Singers and bucket shakers will be most welcome. Any money collected will go to Stonepillow. We will be singing on 12 occasions leading up to Christmas, as follows:

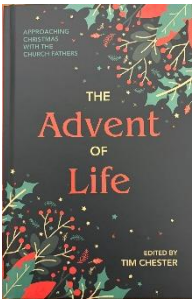
- Monday 14th Dec Evening
- Tuesday 15th Dec Evening
- Wednesday 16th Dec Matinee
- Thursday 17th Dec Matinee and Evening
- Saturday 19th Dec Matinee
- Monday 21st Dec Matinee and Evening
- Tuesday 22nd Dec Evening
- Wednesday 23rd Dec Matinee and Evening
- Thursday 24th Dec Matinee

We sing when the audience exits the theatre and we will probably need to be in place ready for 4pm for a matinee and 9pm for an evening performance but will be able to give more precise timings in due course (it's always a bit of a guess for the first show, but then it quickly settles into a pattern).

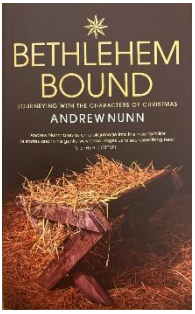
Chris Merrien
07913 353018 chrismerrien@hotmail.com

Advent Books in the Church Library

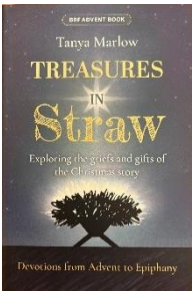
There are some new books on Advent in the Church Library. The Advent section is to your left as you stand in front of the shelves and there are a few books on display on the shelf above as well.



The Advent of Life: Approaching Christmas with the Church Fathers by Tim Chester (Editor) invites you to journey through the season of Advent guided by the voices of early Christian leaders – those who shaped the foundations of our faith and continue to inspire believers today. Each reflection features a carefully selected passage from a Church Father – such as Augustine, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and others – paired with insightful commentary and practical prayers. These ancient voices speak with clarity and warmth, offering fresh perspectives and rekindle your awe for the miracle of Christmas.



Bethlehem Bound: Journeying with the Characters of Christmas by Andrew Nunn is a daily spiritual travel companion for the season, beginning with the great Advent antiphons that herald the feast, and ending with the Presentation in the Temple. Each day it travels with a different character from scripture and the Christian tradition – Jesse, Anna, Gabriel, the donkey, the innkeeper and his wife, the shepherds and many more.

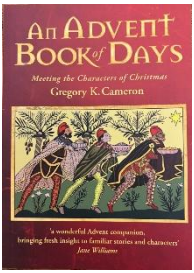


Treasures in Straw: Exploring the griefs and gifts of the Christmas story by Tanya Marlow. For some, Christmas is a magical time. For others, it can be painful, and the usual tinselled tellings of the Christmas story feel unbearably saccharine. Yet in that first Christmas, all of life is there – disgrace and honour, danger and protection, uncertainty and hope, temptation and tyranny, sorrow and celebration. With thoughtful research, pastoral insight, and honest stories, Treasures in Straw explores the themes of loss and blessing

throughout the nativity. Against a darker backdrop, we see with greater clarity God's unexpected generosity and our unshakeable blessings. However you feel about Christmas, this book will leave you with fresh hope, deeper understanding, and genuine joy in living with Christ.

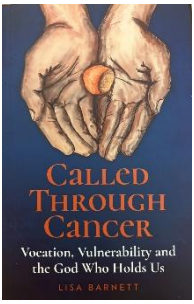
And one that is not newly in, but is a lovely book:

An Advent Book of Days: Meeting the characters of Christmas by Gregory K. Cameron. For each day of Advent, we meet a character caught up in the drama of the nativity, from the archangel Gabriel to the ox and ass in the stable. We discover what their portrayal in scripture reveals about them, how they have been understood in history, what folk legends have accrued around them, and what their stories offer for faith and devotion today. This is a book to engage all the senses and the imagination, to be enjoyed slowly and to shed new light on the most famous and familiar story of all.

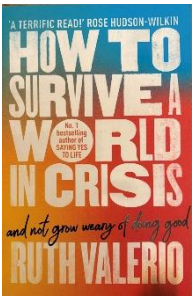


We have now also got two books which were asked for:

Called Through Cancer: Vocation, Vulnerability and the God Who Holds Us by Lisa Barnett, who as an Anglican priest reflects on her own journey through cancer treatment and discovers a profound truth: that even in suffering, we are called. (Section 4 – Pastoral – straight in front of you)



How to Survive a World in Crisis (And Not Grow Weary of Doing Good) by Dr Ruth Valerio. Combining spiritual wisdom with practical tools, Ruth helps readers build resilience, sustain hope, care for their wellbeing, and continue working for justice, reconciliation, and environmental renewal. (Section 2 – Christian Life – just above the Advent books)



Christian Aid

BREAD & SOUP LUNCHES

ALL AT CHRIST CHURCH
Old Market Avenue

12.00 PM -1.00PM

5 Advent Wednesdays

Arranged by members of the following churches

25th November
St. Paul's

2nd December
Quakers

9th December
The Cathedral

16th December
St. George's

23rd December
Christ Church and St. Wilfrid's

Eat, chat and give what you can

Sunday 6th December

Bring to church
new toys or unwrapped gifts
suitable for older children



To be distributed through FSW across the diocese to families in need

DIARY

All events at St Paul's unless stated otherwise

MORNING PRAYER - WEEKDAYS AT 9AM

Su 29 Nov		**Advent Sunday**	
		8am	Holy Communion
		10am	Parish Eucharist with Junior Church and créche followed by refreshments
		6pm	Advent Carol Service followed by refreshments
M	30 Nov		
Tu	1 Dec	10am	Praying for St Paul's Renewed
W	2 Dec	12noon	Christian Aid Soup Lunch at Christ Church, Market Ave.
		5.30pm	Evensong at St Olav's Bookshop, North Street.
Th	3 Dec	10am	Eucharist followed by refreshments
		11am	Bible Study
		6pm	Choir Practice (*Senior choristers: 6.30pm; adults: 7pm*)
F	4 Dec	4.30pm	Ignite
		5.30pm	Blaze
Sa	5 Dec	6pm	Consort of Twelve concert: A Baroque Christmas
Su	**6 Dec**	**Second Sunday of Advent & Toy Sunday**	
		8am	Holy Communion
		10am	All-age Eucharist (créche toys available) followed by refreshments.
		3pm	Afternoon Tea, concluding with Evening Prayer
M	7 Dec		
Tu	8 Dec	10am	Praying for St Paul's Renewed
W	9 Dec	12noon	Christian Aid Soup Lunch at Christ Church, Market Ave.
		2.30pm	Ladies' Group
Th	10 Dec	10am	Eucharist followed by refreshments
		6pm	Choir Practice (*Senior choristers: 6.30pm; adults: 7pm*)
F	11 Dec	4.30pm	Ignite
		5.30pm	Blaze
		7.30pm	Southdowns Concert Band Concert
Sa	12 Dec		

Su 13 Dec	**Third Sunday of Advent**	
	8am	Holy Communion
	10am	Parish Eucharist with Junior Church and créche followed by refreshments
M 14 Dec	2.30pm	Chess Group
Tu 15 Dec	10am	Praying for St Paul's Renewed
	2.15pm	f3a
W 16 Dec	12noon	Christian Aid Soup Lunch at Christ Church, Market Ave.
	6pm	A Georgian Carol Service at St John's Chapel
Th 17 Dec	10am	Eucharist followed by refreshments
	11am	Mothers' Union
	6pm	Choir Practice (*Senior choristers: 6.30pm; adults: 7pm*)
Fr 18 Dec	4.30pm	Ignite
	6pm	Blaze
Sa 19 Dec	7.30pm	The Chichester Singers Concert
Su 20 Dec	**Fourth Sunday of Advent**	
	8am	Holy Communion
	10am	Parish Eucharist with Junior Church and créche followed by refreshments
	6pm	Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
M 21 Dec		
Tu 22 Dec	10am	Praying for St Paul's Renewed
	6pm	Service of Comfort and Hope at Christmas
W 23 Dec	12noon	Christian Aid Soup Lunch at Christ Church, Market Ave.
Th 24 Dec	10am	Eucharist
	4pm	Family Nativity Service
	11.30pm	Midnight Mass
F 25 Dec		Note: there is no 8am service on Christmas Day
	10am	Christmas Morning Eucharist
Sa 26 Dec		
Su 27 Dec	**Christmas 1**	
	8am	Holy Communion
	10am	Parish Eucharist followed by refreshments

Selected dates in the following two weeks:

Th 31 Dec	10am	Eucharist
Su 3 Jan	**Epiphany**	
	8am	Holy Communion
	10am	All-age Eucharist (créche toys available) followed by refreshments.
	6pm	Epiphany Procession at The Cathedral with St Paul's Choir
Tu 5 Jan	10am	Praying for St Paul's Renewed
	2pm	Bible Study
Th 7 Jan	10am	Eucharist followed by refreshments
	11am	Bible Study
	6pm	Choir Practice (*Senior choristers: 6.30pm; adults: 7.15pm*)
F 8 Jan	4.30pm	Ignite
	5.30pm	Blaze
Su 10 Jan	**Baptism of Christ**	
	8am	Holy Communion
	10am	Parish Eucharist with Junior Church and créche followed by refreshments

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

The wise men followed a star which led them to the place where Jesus was born.

Challenge:

Did you know that astronomers think that there are about 100 thousand million stars in the Milky Way? What are the other things in God's creation that make you say 'Wow'?

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for your amazing Creation. We praise you for everything that makes us go 'Wow'!

Find all 24 Advent Activity and Colouring Sheets plus daily reflections for teens and adults via cofe.io/TheGiftOfChristmas

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Based on Advent from A to Z (Church House Publishing, 2026) Illustrations by Cesar @ Fiverr, reflections by Imogen Ball, Philip North and Andrew Zihni. © The Archbishops Council 2026.

ADVENT ACTIVITY AND COLOURING SHEET

19 December

S IS FOR STAR

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

Matthew 2.1-2





Carol Service at St. Paul's

A traditional service of
Readings and Carols
led by our wonderful choir

SUNDAY 20th

6pm

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



A service of Comfort and Hope at St. Paul's

A gentle Christmas service for those who find this time of year difficult

Tuesday 22nd

6pm

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

Family Nativity at St. Paul's

A short Christmas service for the whole family.

Children are invited to dress as a nativity character

Thursday 24th

4pm

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

Midnight Mass at St. Paul's

A traditonal service to welcome Christmas Day

THURSDAY 24th

11.30pm

(Please note that Incense is used at this service)

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



Christmas Day at St Paul's

A service of Holy Communion for all the family on Christmas Morning

Friday 25th

10am

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



St John's Chapel, Chichester

A GEORGIAN CAROL SERVICE

Members of St Paul's Choir,
Director Chris Larley, Organist Dr Alan Thurlow
Led by Revd Canon Paul Doick

6.00 pm, Weds 16 December

St John's Chapel, St John's St, Chichester

No tickets required – retiring collection

THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

St Wilfrid's Hospice
Making a difference to local lives

Tree Cycle



Recycle your real Christmas tree with St Wilfrid's Hospice

Our tree-mendous Hospice volunteers will collect your real Christmas tree from your doorstep, helping you avoid the pine needles. Your tree will be recycled into mulch and chippings to support local farmland.

Proudly sponsored by
BEAVER TOOL HIRE

Book by 4th January 2027

Find out more at: stwh.co.uk

Fundraising Regulator
Registered Charity No. 281963

Showtime & Sparkle

CHICHESTER MUSICAL THEATRE Choir

An evening of Christmas Musical Magic with Chichester Musical Theatre Choir...

...filled with showstopping songs, spectacular harmonies, festive sparkle and plenty of musical theatre magic!

A festive, family-friendly atmosphere full of warmth and laughter.

FRIDAY 18th DECEMBER

7.30pm (Doors open at 7.00pm)

in the stunning setting of beautiful
St Paul's Church, Chichester PO19 6FT

TICKETS JUST

£15 EACH

(Includes a free glass of wine or soft drink in the interval)

BOOK NOW!

Scan the QR code, or see ticket link below in post



All profits from this event will be donated to St Wilfrid's Hospice
Making a difference to local lives

www.musicaltheatrechoir.org

SOUTHDOWNS
CONCERT BAND

Christmas Festival Concert

with the

St. Paul's Church Choir

Friday 11th December | 7.30pm

St. Paul's Church, Chichester PO19 6FT

£12.50

(Under 16s free)

Refreshments available

SCAN THE QR CODE
FOR TICKETS FROM EVENTBRITE

Also available from St. Paul's Church Office

In aid of Sophie's Legacy Charity
(RCN 1198979)

PORTSMOUTH BAROQUE CHOIR

The Consort of Twelve

Musical Director
Malcolm Keeler



A Baroque Christmas

Bach - Nun komm der heiden Heiland
Corelli - Christmas Concerto
Handel - Messiah Part I (extracts)
Bach - Christmas Oratorio II (extracts)
Charpentier - Messe de Minuit
Buxtehude - Das Neugeborne Kindelein

6.00 pm Saturday December 5th

St Paul's Church

Churchside, Chichester, PO19 6FT

Tickets: £20, £5 students, £1 children on the door or online via

www.ticketsource.com/consortof12

www.portsmouthbaroquechoir.co.uk