

NEWSLETTER

November 2023

from the Church of St. Michael's Bray



The Parish Church of Bray with Braywood, Holyport & Moneyrow
Green, Fifield, Touchen End and Oakley Green

website: www.braystmichael.co.uk



What is Advent?

In the Christian Church, Advent (this year beginning on 3rd December) is a period of preparation extending over the four Sundays before Christmas.

The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *advenio*, "to come to," and refers to the coming of Christ. And the term *the coming* includes three references: first of all, to our celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas; second, to the coming of Christ in our lives through grace and the Sacrament of Holy Communion; and finally, to his second coming at the end of time.

Our preparations, therefore, should have all three comings in mind. We need to prepare our souls to receive Christ worthily.

First We Fast; Then We Feast

Advent has been called a "little Lent," because it traditionally has included a period of increased prayer, fasting, and good works. Although the Western Church no longer has a set requirement for fasting during Advent, the Eastern Church (both Catholic and Orthodox) continues to observe what is known as Philip's Fast, from November 15 until Christmas.

Traditionally, all great feasts have been preceded by a time of fasting, which makes the feast itself more joyful. Unfortunately, Advent today has supplanted by "the Christmas shopping season," so that by the time Christmas Day comes, many people no longer enjoy the feast or even specially mark the next 12 days of the Christmas season, which lasts until Epiphany and the arrival of the three Kings.

The Symbols of Advent

In its symbolism, the church continues to stress the penitential and preparatory nature of Advent. As during Lent, priests wear purple vestments, and the Gloria ("Glory to God") is omitted during the Eucharist. The only exception is on the Third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday, when priests can wear rose-coloured vestments (we don't have any that colour at Bray!). As on Laetare Sunday during Lent, this exception is designed to encourage us to continue our prayer and fasting, because we can see that Advent is more than halfway over.

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The Advent Wreath

Perhaps the best-known of all Advent symbols is the Advent wreath, a custom that originated among German Lutherans but was soon adopted by others. Consisting of four candles (usually three purple or blue and one pink) arranged in a circle with evergreen boughs and a fifth, white candle in the center, the Advent wreath corresponds to the four Sundays of Advent. The purple or blue candles represent the penitential nature of the season, while the pink candle calls to mind the respite of Gaudete Sunday. The white candle, when used, represents Christmas.



Celebrating Advent

We can better enjoy Christmas—all 12 days of it—if we revive Advent as a period of preparation. We can incorporate customs such as the Advent wreath, into our daily life, and we can set some time aside for special scripture readings for Advent, which remind us of the threefold coming of Christ. **We will be having a service of Night Prayer (Compline) on the Sundays in Advent at 9.00 pm live on Zoom (not in church).**

Holding off putting up the Christmas tree and other decorations is another way to remind ourselves that the feast is not here yet. Traditionally, such decorations were put up on Christmas Eve, and they would not be taken down until after Epiphany, in order to celebrate the Christmas season to its fullest.

Rev'd Ainsley Swift

St Michael's Christmas Services

All are welcome

*St Michael's Church
Bray SL6 2AA
01628 633113*

<https://www.braystmichael.co.uk/>

3rd Dec - 4pm - Advent Carol Service*

9th Dec - 3pm - Christingle Service

10th Dec - 3pm - Community Carol Concert

17th Dec - 4pm - Traditional Carol Service*

24th Dec - 3pm - Crib Service

24th Dec - 11:30pm - Midnight Mass*

25th Dec - 8am - Christmas Day Service

25th Dec - 10am - Christmas Day Service*

** zoom as well as in-church please
see church website for details*



For unto us a child is born - Isaiah 9:6



24th December at 3pm - Crib Service

This year we will be holding a Crib Service on Christmas Eve for children of all ages!

Gathering around the crib for Christmas Carols, short readings and a Christmas story (service will last approximately 30 minutes).

All are welcome!





December 10th Community Carols 3 p.m.

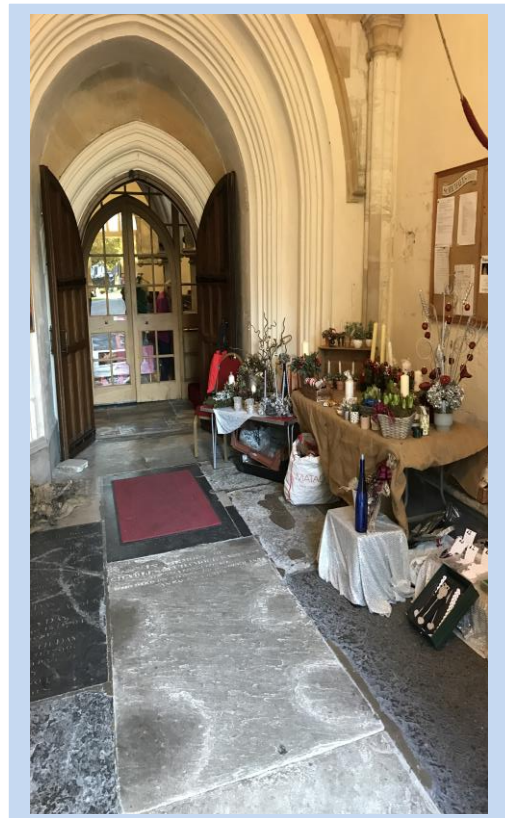
Join St Michael's Choir, Community Choir
and friends for a Christmas celebration
with audience carols and festive songs
In aid of Thames Hospice

Admission free with Afternoon Tea



On Saturday 11th November we held our first Christmas Fayre for sometime with 15 different types of crafters displaying and selling their crafts. The Fayre was very well attended and my grateful thanks to all involved. We will look to do another event in the summer months

Katrin Brunning



CONTACT LIST

The Vicar: Ainsley Swift 633113

For general enquiries (Christenings, Weddings etc) in the first instance please contact our Parish Administrator, Richard Severn: 01628 633113 stmichaelsbray@gmail.com"

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Penny Murray 623041
Mary Wiles 635000

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Lynda Jones 635178
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Penny Murray

Director of Music:

Oliver Gooch

Assistant Director of Music:

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