

Friday 22nd December to Friday 5th January 2024



St Mary's Church Eccleston / St Mary's Church Pulford

[Eccleston and Pulford Churches](#)

Email:

rector@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org

EcclestonChurchWarden@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org

PulfordChurchWarden@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org

Dear Reader,

The parish newsletter is also available to download from the church website:

<https://www.ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org/category/newsletters/>

For up-to-date service information please see the church website:

<https://www.ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org/services/>

Please feel free to email suggestions for future newsletter articles.

Thank you to Rob Hughes for his contribution this week and also to Helen Allison for providing the article written by Peter Jackson.

We wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year

Kind Regards

Stephen Hutchinson (hutch@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org)

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Parish information

Rector:

Pulford/Eccleston	Revd. Dr Stephen Torr	Rector @ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
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Church Wardens:

Pulford	Sue Payne (assistant Bridget Marsden)	PulfordChurchWarden @ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
Eccleston	John Richards (assistants Julie Rowland and Steve Hutchinson)	EcclestonChurchWarden @ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org

Licensed Lay Minister

Pulford/Eccleston	Jeanette Howe	Jeanette @ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
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Planned Giving Officer / Treasurer

Pulford/Eccleston	Bridget Marsden	Treasurer @ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
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Safeguarding Officer

Pulford/Eccleston	Hilary Garrard	Safeguarding @ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
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Electoral Roll Officer

Eccleston	Andrew Wilkinson
Pulford	Clare Willan

Organists and Assistants

Pulford/Eccleston	Derek Whatling /Dennis Jones
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Director of Music

Eccleston/Pulford	Maureen Richards	mothemusic@gmail.com
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Tower Captains

Eccleston	Andrew Pridding
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PCC Secretary

Pulford/Eccleston	Andrew Wilkinson
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Newsletter/Website

Pulford/Eccleston	Stephen Hutchinson	Hutch @ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
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Church Service Dates Times and Locations.

All services will be led by the Reverend Dr Stephen Torr apart from the 31st December service which will be led by Stephen Attwater.

Date	St Mary's PULFORD	St Mary's ECCLESTON	Reader	Prayers	Sides-person
Sun 24 th Dec. Christmas Eve		11.15 AM HC	Terry Brightmore	Steve Hutch	Terry Brightmore
Sun 24 th Dec. Christmas Eve		4 PM Crib Service	Clare Willan	Clare Willan	Jeanette
Sun 24 th Dec. Christmas Eve	Midnight HC 11.15 PM		Sue Payne	Rob Hughes	?
25 th Dec Christmas Day		10am HC	Hilary G	Helen & Rebekah	Hilary G
31 st Dec. 1 st of Christmas		11.15am HC	Anne B	Steve Hutch	Steve Hutch
7 th Jan.	9.45am HC				
14 th Jan		11.15am HC			
21 st Jan	9.45am HC	11.15am All Age.	n/a	n/a	

HC = Holy Communion, **MW** = Morning Worship.

An up-to-date rota for readers/intercessors and sidespeople can be found at:

<https://www.ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org/rota>

Important News and Reminders

Food Bank

A reminder from Rachel Williams. Here are a few of the facts being highlighted on the Foodbank website: 3507, Emergency Food Parcels issued in 6 months to 30 September 22 - up 60% on pre pandemic levels, 7617, Local people in crisis fed, 2828, Feeding the equivalent of 2828 local children. The charity is very grateful for all donations - but especially non cook items such as crackers, Ryvita, Fish/meat pastes, Instant pastas/rice/soups and toiletries (toothpaste and brushes). They have PLENTY of dried Pasta, Baked Beans

Urgently Wanted

- Tinned Meat and Fish, Tomatoes, Desserts & Potatoes, UHT Milk & Juice, Custard, Small Jars Instant Coffee, Jams and Spreads, Instant Mashed, Cereal Bars, Instant Pasta & Instant Noodles

Also Wanted

- 'Cuppa' Soup, Pot Noodles, Pasta Sauce, Biscuits, Breakfast Cereal

Rob Hughes Homily: Advent 2023

“Veni, Vidi, vici” - a well-known (Latin) phrase meaning ‘I’ve come, I’ve seen and I’ve conquered’. It was first attributed to Julius Caesar after winning a battle in Asia Minor (though we Brits wrongly think he said it after defeating our ancestors). There’s a modern twist, though - **Veni, Vidi, Visa** - I came, I saw, and spent up... As Christmas time approaches, no doubt our credit and debit cards will be readily-to-hand, and probably fully-utilized.

The Latin noun **adventus** is often translated simply as **arrival** or **coming**. But there’s more to it than that, in fact... There are at least two other Latin words that could be translated in this way, not counting loads of interjections. So why did the early Church go with the term **Advent** to describe the period leading up to Christmas?

Well, the Latin verb it’s derived-from has a whole range of intriguing meanings, which include “military arrivals” - the ‘glorious entry’ of an emperor into his capital city after a major military victory. Interestingly, for a Christian, **adventus** is being used to commemorate the birthday of the royal leader.

The Season of Advent has probably been observed since about the fourth century - originally a time when converts to Christianity readied themselves for baptism. But during the Middle Ages, it became associated with preparation, not so much for an annual celebration of the nativity of Jesus, but preparing for the Second Coming of the Saviour. And in more recent times, of course, we tend to associate Advent as a time for reflection, in anticipation of celebrating the birth of the Christ-child.

Our focus tends to be on four main themes, marked with candles: Hope; Peace; John the Baptist’s ministry; the Joy of Mary the mother of Jesus. There is, of course a fifth Candle - the white one in the middle - which we light in time for Christmas Day - Christ the Light of the World... then, and now and forever. But it occurs to me that we don’t necessarily fully home-in on anticipating the second coming of Christ. At which point we consider the gospel phrase:

“Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.... So, you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

The Gospel says, in no uncertain terms (to the early Christians then, and to us now), that we need to be vigilant, and to make ready, for the coming of Christ again. Which prompts an important question that is still open to academic and philosophical debate...Do we believe that “Christ will come again”? After all, and for example:

- It could easily be reasoned that the Gospel Writers “didn’t really mean it”.
- Or we might think it possibly refers to Christ coming into our hearts over and over again when we let Him in after, ‘failing’ in some way, and being forgiven...
- Or do we believe it simply refers to the coming to us of the Holy Spirit?

A question for Advent then, do we view the truth of the statement:

- as a threat? - Christ **WILL** come again so **watch out!**
- or as a promise that we should welcome?

Well, our loving God doesn’t make idle threats for effect. So surely, this is a simple truth, albeit an **invitation to get ready**.... Advent is an opportunity to examine our preparedness - not just for Christmas **this** year, but preparedness to meet our Lord when he **comes again**, which may or may not be in our time - we don’t know!

So, what can we **do to prepare** - well the New Testament is clear about this:

- **John the Baptist’s** teachings on preparedness are about acknowledging sins-committed, turning from them, and leading better lives in love and harmony with God and with each other.

- **For St Matthew**, readiness means living the quality of life described in the Sermon on the Mount, and described throughout his gospel: the performance of good works; abstinence from bad behavior, love for enemies and each other; forgiveness of others; unhesitating faith in, and loyalty to, Jesus; and love for God.

Frankly - it's very likely we'll drift off the path - repeatedly - but the good news is that God loves us enough to forgive and renew us - provided we do our best, and **continually prepare ourselves - in our hearts** - for when Christ will come again (whenever, however, this might be).

Let's consider that the Advent season is not just a time to prepare for celebrating the Nativity (although that is a necessary and most pleasant reality). It's not only a time to receive Christ afresh into our homes and in into our hearts as we celebrate His birthday. It's a time to prepare the rest of our lives "in Him and with Him". So, our prayer might be:

Father, just as You sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus, help us to clear the path in our hearts too. As we celebrate the first nativity, help us to live our lives where we're constantly seeking Your presence, here and now. May we offer to You, today, righteous lives, so show us today how we need to be refined, purified, forgiven. Give us the strength to not simply ask for forgiveness, but to change our ways.



[Rob Hughes 22/12/2023]

Rectors of Eccleston Part 1 – William Bispham 1636 to 1685

(This article originally appeared in the February 2009 edition of the Parish News and was written by Peter Jackson).

Since 1300, there have been 44 Rectors of Eccleston and, though the histories of the earlier holders of office are shrouded in the mists of time, a great deal is known about those of the 17th Century onwards.

One such was William Bispham, whom the historian Ormerod refers to as a “great sufferer in the civil disturbances of his time”. Bispham, a graduate of Trinity College Cambridge, became rector in 1636, not long before the Civil War and he was evicted from the living in 1644 – presumably for exhibiting Royalist sympathies. Archdeacon Burne, in his book *Chester Cathedrals* (1958), states that Bispham was accused of joining with Archdeacon George Snell, Rector of Waverton, and with Prebendary Duckworth, Rector of Doddleston. Their “crime” was that they had jointly provided a man and horse for the Royal Army. Snell professed his affection for Parliament but it appears that he was not believed and his plural livings were taken from him. Duckworth was evicted from Doddleston in 1646. Bispham fled to France but was restored to Eccleston in 1660.

The 3 clergy evicted had in fact only done their duty since, at the beginning of the 17th Century, the clergy were responsible for the provision of men, horses and arms in accordance with lists prepared by the Bishop.

Thus, it may be said that the 3 clergy were evicted for doing what they saw as their duty in the Royalist cause. Bispham was restored to the living in 1660 and remained there until his death in 1685.

[Peter Jackson 2009]

Official Facebook pages for Eccleston Church and Pulford Church:

There are now 2 official pages for Eccleston and Pulford Church on Facebook. There were already 2 unofficial pages, but these new official pages, it is hoped, will be more relevant to the Church and its activities.

Eccleston Church: <https://www.facebook.com/EcclestonChurch>

Pulford Church: <https://www.facebook.com/PulfordChurch>

If there is anyone who would like to volunteer to be our church Facebook administrator, please email me at

admin@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org

Religious Painting of the Week #1: Adoration of the Shepherds by Caravaggio.

This painting was the last painting by Caravaggio who completed it in 1609. Caravaggio died mysteriously 1 year after completing this painting in 1610.

At the time, many people were critical of Caravaggio's tendency to depict biblical figures as ordinary peasants deeming this 'vulgar'.

This painting is probably more realistic than many similar paintings of the nativity. There is no holy light source illuminating the scene typical of many nativity scenes. The stable is very dark and appears to be lit by a single light source similar to that of a candle.

Mary and Joseph's halos are hardly visible.

There is a basket containing a loaf of bread signifying Mary and Joseph's poverty. Also visible are some tools signifying Joseph's profession as a carpenter.

The beauty of the painting is the underlying theme of humility. Mary is admired by the shepherds not because of her clothes or status within society (she is portrayed lying on the ground), but because of *who* she is.



Religious Painting of the week #2: "Nativity with St. Francis and St. Lawrence" by Caravaggio.

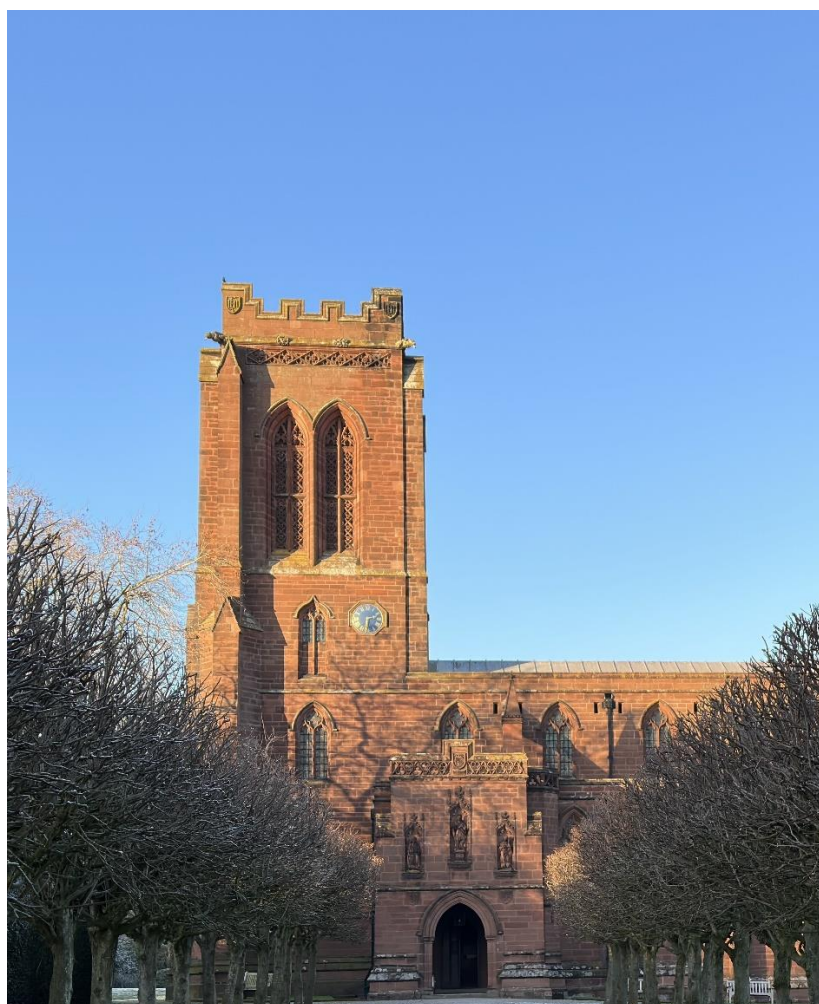


The Nativity with St. Francis and St. Lawrence is a painting of the nativity of Jesus from 1609 by Italian Painter Caravaggio. It has been missing since 1969 when it was stolen from the Oratory of Saint Lawrence in Palermo. A replica was commissioned in 2015 and now hangs in the altar. The painting is believed to have been painted by Caravaggio one year before he died.

The theft is considered one of the most significant art crimes in history possibly due to the valuation of the painting (£20 million).

The whereabouts of the original painting are still a mystery to this day.

Eccleston Church in Winter.



Adverts.

There have been several requests to return to including adverts in the Parish Newsletter. If anyone would like to advertise, please email:

admin@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org

Pulford and Poulton Local History Group Talks (Held at Pulford Village Hall)

There will be a Quiz and Buffet at Pulford Village Hall (CH4 9ES) on **Wednesday 17th January** at 7.30pm. Tickets are £8 and can be purchased in advance from the Pulford and Poulton Local History Group. Email: info@pplhg.org.uk for details.

Their website is available at <https://pplhg.org.uk>

Pulford Church App

A Pulford Church tour guide is available for Android Phones only.

[Click here for Pulford Church Tour Guide for Android Phones](#)

Reader/Intercessor/Sidesperson Rota

At the last PCC meeting it was suggested that Eccleston Church return to having a sidesperson. It was suggested that either the reader or prayer lead for the service act as sidesperson to make things easy. If someone is already available to read then it saves having to try and organize an additional rota for sidespeople.

Duties of the sidesperson include

- ***greeting people*** as they enter the church
- ***handing out hymn books/service sheets***
- ***inviting people to communion (for Holy Communion Services)***
- ***counting the total number in the congregation.***
- ***Putting the correct hymn numbers in the hymn boards.***

If any of the readers/intercessors do not want to appear as sidesperson, please let me know

by emailing me at admin@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org

The Rota for readers/intercessors and sidespeople is accessible at:

<https://www.ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org/rota>