



St Denys Bulletin

The church is open daily from

December 2025 / January 2026

Services at a glance:

- Every Sunday 10am
Sung Eucharist
- Every Wednesday 10am
Said Communion
- Mon, Tues and Thurs
8.45am Morning Prayer
- 5th Sunday 6pm
United Service at one of
the Sleaford churches.

Directory:

Vicar of Sleaford and Rural Dean

The Rev'd Philip Johnson
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The Parish Office

Parish Administrator

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Churchwardens

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PCC Treasurer

Brenda Hitchcock

Bible Reading

The Antiphon for Vespers (Evensong) on the 23rd December

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver,
the hope of the nations and their Saviour:

Come and save us, O Lord our God.

Letter from the Vicar, Rev'd Philip Johnson

A few weeks ago, I went to our local garden centre (well, the butchers inside the centre, to be precise). On my journey through the store I encountered huge snowmen, singing reindeers, and a brass band playing carols. At night the store is a blaze of festive light. I must admit that although many are no doubt encouraged by all of this to buy decorations for their homes and workplaces, it does not have that effect on me. I feel a bit sorry for the staff who (in my opinion) must endure three months of faux festive jollity. I suspect that when Christmas finally does arrive, they are only too glad to pack it all away and return to 'normality'.

This long commercial Christmas does not make me feel very Christmassy', that is a word. In fact, it probably has the opposite effect to the one intended. You might, by this stage, imagine that I am the clerical version of Ebenezer Scrooge, thinking that all festive jollity is bah-humbug. And in some respects, you might be right! However, somewhere during December a change occurs.

Throughout December I will be present at numerous concerts in the church, and I will lead many carol services. We are fortunate that so many of the schools in the town want to hold a carol service in the church. It is normally at one of these school carol services that the gear shift from Scrooge to Christmas joy occurs.

Most years, the close harmony group from St George's, perform a song called 'Mary, did you know?' It was written in 1984 by Mark Lowry, but the recording by the group Pentatonix made it more widely known. The song, as the title suggests, takes us through the life of Jesus, asking Mary, if she knew he would do these things: *The blind will see/The deaf will hear;/The dead will live again!/The lame will leap/The dumb will speak/The praises of the Lamb!*

The song asks Mary if she realises that when she kisses her little baby that she has kissed the face of God. It is a powerful image that, for me, cuts

through the faux jollity of *Jingle-Bells* and the *Twelve Days of Christmas*. This line always has a powerful effect on me, in much the same way as the final verse of *O Come all ye faithful*. In David Wilcock's arrangement, the mighty chord on *WORD* which sets us up to sing '*now in flesh appearing*', never fails to send shivers down my spine. But the common theme in these two pieces of music is that they bring us face-to-face with the reality of the incarnation: God with us – Immanuel in the Hebrew language.

Without the incarnation Christmas is nothing. The lights, trees, decorations, food, jolly music might bring a bit of fun into the dark winter months, but ultimately there is nothing to satisfy humanities greatest longings. True joy can only be found when we acknowledge the gift of God's love in the face of his son – the babe of Bethlehem.

Fr Philip

From the Churchwardens

FUNDRAISING

It is a pleasure to say that so far this year we have doubled the amount raised from the previous year. As we write this there are still four more events to give us an opportunity to raise more funds throughout 2025.

Christmas Market in the Market Place - soup and hot drinks served by the west doors.

Lumos are holding a concert in the church on the 5th December providing an opportunity to offer refreshments.

Winter Light festival on Saturday 20th December - soup and hot drinks served by the west doors.

Christmas Carol service on Sunday 21st December at 5pm - followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

May we take the opportunity to thank everyone who has helped our fundraising by attending the events that have been organised throughout the year.

NEW FOR 2026

Watch out for more fun and frolics coming up next year. Starting with our first **Annual**

Churchwardens Lunch and social event on Sunday, 1st February. Also planned is a **Bingo Night**, **Quizz** and the usual Sunday meals to celebrate various Christian Festivals throughout the year. In addition there will be the annual **Celebrate Wimbledon** with pimmis and prosecco ... and more to follow.

2025 and all that

The following is a small selection of work carried out within St Denys during 2025.

Jan: Mid-week Holy Communion re-introduced in the Lady Chapel following extensive repairs to the floor area.

Feb: Kneelers in the nave had soft coverings removed and stained throughout.

Mar: Full electrical inspection carried out within the church building.

Apr: Church gutters cleared of all winter debris.

May: Arrangements agreed for film crew to use the church for shooting a film relating to the local community.

Jun: Visitation service held in St Denys. At this service all elected Churchwardens within the surrounding churches are sworn in by the Archdeacon.

Jul: Remedial work carried out on the nave, north and south transept roofs.

Aug: New heating system installed in the main hall of Parish Centre.

Sep: Serious water ingress in the choir vestry due to a blocked gully (twice).

Oct: Public notice displayed relating to a faculty application. The application concerns fixing a door within the church to create a secure storage area for storing TV screens.

Nov: Grass area and flower beds in front of west doors tidied up.

Dec: Various funds raising events as outlined above under Fundraising.

... and finally

So many people carry out a multitude of jobs and commitments within the life of St Denys it is impossible to name everyone. It goes without saying how grateful we are that so many of you are able to help out in making St Denys what it is. In many respects we are an extended family and it is encouraging to see how we all look out for each other. With so many uncertainties these days it is so gratifying to know how many care about the parish church and add to it its many tapestries and colours. Thank you to everyone for your support and help.

The Third Imp? by Douglas Hoare

Last month there was an item on Look North, 'The day the devil's lesser-known imp was petrified'. The Lincoln Imp's legend is well-known. But tour guide, Emma Lingard, says, 'His lesser known accomplice, reputed to be a twin, was just as 'mischievous'. When the angels told him to stop, he cheekily replied 'stop me if you can.....' The imp, who was said to be terrified (by the angels), fled to Grimsby (Minster) 'where 'a fire ravaged the church'.

'In the aftermath of the fire, the imp was 'severely spanked' and imprisoned, before being turned to stone..... The Grimsby Imp is portrayed holding his sore bottom as proof the angel spanked him.'

At St. Denys's, in the (right) arcade second from west end (S8) is a carving very much like the Grimsby 'imp'. He too, 'is portrayed holding his sore bottom'. Do we, perhaps, have a third imp who fled from the Cathedral and, for his pains, was turned to stone and set where he lurks today?

William Alvey School Bishop's Visitor Update

November has seen a variety of Assembly topics. Just before Bonfire Night we heard the story of Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plotters and the children were encouraged to stay safe if they went to a fireworks event.

On Armistice Day we heard about who and what we remember and why we have the Silence. We heard the Last Post and Reveille and why we hear those. The music was Elgar's Nimrod Variation and the children were asked to think about how it made them feel listening to it. Then we had our own Silence. The back wall of the hall had been decorated with poppies made by the children with a silhouette of a Lancaster bomber. The poppies looked like they were falling from the sky from the back of the plane. It was a very moving sight to see.

Another time we had visitors from the Rotary Club who presented badges and certificates to Rainbow Stars (one from each year group) who had been recommended for their acts of kindness to others. The parents of those children also attended the event and photos were taken afterwards.

The Prayer Space has been recently refreshed and updated with a Prayer Tree on which prayers can be hung. The theme of the display is world faiths reflecting the fact that the school, like the world, has children of other faiths as well as Christianity.

Reading from Isaiah 7.14 (KJV)

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign;
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel

Birth, the first clear trickle
of a mountain spring,
Arises, joyful, touched with morning gleams
Tumbles, laughing, down the rocky steep.
Now flowing fuller, but slower
Till perchance learning to weep
as do we.
Then gaining strength, travels bravely
into the great engulfing sea.
Laughing with the merry waves
Recalls at last, it's infant glee.
Jenny Whybrow
(published with permission of the author)
Submitted by David Birks

Into December, thoughts will turn towards Advent and Christmas and the Hall will be transformed with the tree and decorations which will appear. I am already looking forward to the Nativity Play and Christmas songs and the whole school will come to church for their Carol Service before they break up for the holidays. What a treat to be part of it all!

Beryl Risdell



Sleaford Choral Christmas Concert

Saturday 13th December 7.30pm
St Denys' Church Sleaford.

Excerpts from J S Bach Christmas Oratorio and traditional carols

Conductor: Rowland Lee
Accompanist: Rosemary Field

Follow us at: sleafordchoralsociety.co.uk

Registered Charity 518318
Purchase tickets at Ticketsource
www.ticketsource.co.uk/booking/t-kdomddy
Ticket price £12, U16 free.



LUMOS

A Vivaldi & Mozart Candlelight Experience

an unforgettable evening of music in an enchanting indoor setting

St Denys Parish Church,
E Gate, Sleaford
Friday 5th December
2 Sittings: 7-8pm | 9-10pm

Book tickets now!
www.lumos-experiences.com

Church Services

(Morning prayer is usually said at 8.45am on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday)

Said Communion every

Wednesday at 10am

(1st Weds of the month is BCP)

DECEMBER / JANUARY

Sunday, 30th November

10am Advent I,

3.30pm Christingle

on the Market Place

Wednesday, 3rd December

10am BCP

Sunday, 7th December

10am Advent II

Wednesday, 10th December

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 14th December

10am Advent III

Wednesday, 17th December

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 21st December

10am Advent IV,

5pm Carol Service

Christmas Eve

There will be no 10am Communion

11pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

10am Sung Communion

Sunday, 28th December

10am Said Communion with hymns

Wednesday, 31st December

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 4th January

10am Christmas II

Tuesday, 6th January

7pm Epiphany

Wednesday, 7th January

10am BCP

Sunday, 11th January

10am Baptism of Christ

Wednesday, 14th January

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 18th January

10am Epiphany II

Wednesday, 21st January

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 25th January

10am Conversion of St Paul

6pm Churches Together at St

Denys Joint Service

Wednesday, 28th January

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 1st February

10am Candlemas



COMMUNICANTS' GUILD

The Guild's Christmas meeting on **Tuesday 16th December at 2 p.m. in the Church Room** will take its traditional form of carols and readings. This is always a most enjoyable occasion to which everyone is welcome. Do come along and join us.

SLEAFORD KESWICK BIBLE MINISTRY

Friday, 5th December and 9th January at 7.30pm

Riverside Church December:

Speaker: Mark Ellis,
Chief Executive of
Keswick Ministries

January: Paul Mallard,
Serves the FIEC Churches in
the West Midlands



Disclaimer: Please note that the opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not reflect the opinions or views of St Denys PCC.