

PARISH CALENDAR December 2025

Date and Event			Officiating	Sidesmen/ women	Altar Flowers	Church Cleaners
7th Dec	Advent II	11.15am Matins	TBC	Mr A. Her- ron	Mrs P. McFall	Mrs A. Wallace
14th Dec	Advent III	11.15am Holy Communion	TBC	Mrs P. McFall		Mr K. & Mrs K. Heron
<p>Friday 19th December Carol Singing—Outside Assheton Arms, from 6pm</p> <p>Saturday 20th December—Decorating the Church for Christmas—from 2pm</p>						
21st Dec	Advent IV	11.15am Christingle and Nativity Service	TBC	Mrs K. Heron	Hon. Mrs. R. Assheton	Hon. Mrs. R. Assheton & Mrs C. Naylor
25th Dec	Christmas Day	11.15am Holy Communion	TBC	Mr B. Lew- is		Mrs R. Harling
28th Dec	Christmas I	Nine Lessons and Carols	TBC	Mrs A. Smith		Mr P. & Mrs M. Mercer

Reverend Paul Sherwood – VicarOfClitheroe@Yahoo.com - 07534 796838

YOUR CHURCH WARDENS

The Hon Ralph Assheton (Parish Safeguarding Officer) 07817 634392

Mrs Anya Wallace - 07757117147

VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chairman Mr Neil Wallace 07969225609

Hon. Secretary Mrs Clare Ashworth—445112

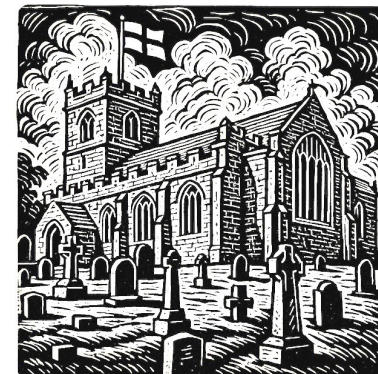
Village Hall Bookings email info@downhamvillagehall.org.uk

PARISH OF ST. LEONARD

DOWNHAM & TWISTON

Newsletter

New email: Downham@mail.com
Website: www.downhamvillage.org.uk



December 2025

A Christmas Prayer



Almighty and most merciful Father, who didst send thy
only-begotten Son into the world
to bring light to them that sit in darkness
and to guide our feet into the way of peace:
Grant that we, gathered in this holy season, may remember
with grateful hearts the true spirit of Christmas.



Bestow thy peace, we beseech thee, upon all nations of the earth;
turn the hearts of rulers and peoples to justice, mercy, and goodwill.
Bless all who serve in distant lands, especially the members of our
Armed Forces separated from home and loved ones.

Have regard unto all who labour for the common good:
those who minister to the sick, those who guard and protect our communities,
and all who, in public service or humble duty,
strive to uphold the welfare of others.

Prosper thy Church in this place and throughout the world;
strengthen our clergy and all who serve thee therein, that by word and deed
they may proclaim the glad tidings of great joy.
Grant unto our rural Parish: health, happiness, and harmony at this holy time;
and pour into our hearts such love and thankfulness
that we may show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



*O God, who hast revealed thy glory in the lowliness of the manger,
grant that we, rejoicing in the birth of thy dear Son,
may learn humility of heart and steadfastness of faith;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Some prominent Saint's Days for December:

Saint Nicholas – 6th December

Bishop of Myra, known for his generosity and the inspiration behind Santa Claus.
Honoured for his care for the poor and children.

Saint Ambrose – 7th December

Bishop of Milan and Doctor of the Church, renowned for his preaching, hymn-writing,
and influence on Saint Augustine.

Saint Lucy (Lucia) – 13th December

Virgin and martyr of Syracuse. Associated with light and often celebrated in Scandinavian
traditions as a bearer of hope in winter darkness.

Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist – 27th December

One of the Twelve Apostles, traditionally considered the author of the Gospel of John and Book
of Revelation.

Notable Dates in History for December:

16th December 1653 – Oliver Cromwell becomes Lord Protector

After the dissolution of the Rump Parliament, Cromwell was declared Lord Protector of the
Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland—ushering in a brief republican period in
British history.

11th December 1936 – Abdication of King Edward VIII

Edward VIII abdicated triggering a constitutional crisis leading to the accession of George VI.

William the Conqueror (and other epithets) was crowned King of England on Christmas Day
1066 at Westminster Abbey in London. The ceremony was conducted by Archbishop Ealdred of
York as the then Archbishop of Canterbury was in disgrace.

Tinsel, Turkey, and Total Mayhem

Let's be honest: Christmas is a magical, sugar-fuelled festival of goodwill... and absolute chaos.
Children bounce off the walls like caffeinated reindeer, while adults wrestle a 17lb turkey into
an oven designed for a lasagne. It's the only time of year we willingly bring a tree *indoors* and
festoon it with sparkly trip hazards, calling it tradition.

But for the little ones? It's glorious. Santa is real and can be tracked by NORAD radar as the
sprout-powered reindeers fly. Remember, for the littlest tots wrapping paper is just as exciting
as the present inside. You'll never beat the sheer joy of discovering, and eating a chocolate or-
ange in your stocking at 6am—unless, of course, you're a parent who was up wrapping until
2am. On the subject of major food groups, remember that After Eights can only be consumer
after the King's Speech and the only broccoli needed on the Big Day comes with a 007 Theme
Tune blocking out the rustle of Roses wrappers.

There's glitter in the carpet, pine needles in your socks, and six hundred Lego pieces where your
dignity used to be. But somehow, it's brilliant. Because Christmas reminds us that, once upon a
time, we all believed in magic. And maybe, just maybe, we still do!

December Outdoors with Festival Bowland

Winter may be upon us, but Bowland's landscapes are still
alive—and Festival Bowland invites you to join two special
outdoor events this December.



Monday 1 December 2025 – Garstang Short Walk

A gentle early-month ramble setting off from Garstang.
The perfect way to shake off the start-of-winter cobwebs
and enjoy crisp air, early frost and those quintessential Bowland views.

Wednesday 10 December 2025, 09:30–11:30 – Nature Connection Walk at Beacon Fell Country Park, Goosnargh

For those seeking a deeper nature experience, join a mindful walk through the park's woods
and moorland. Guided by Rewilding Outdoor Therapy, participants explore the sounds,
textures and stillness of Bowland in winter—just £5 per person (booking essential).

Wrap up warm, bring suitable footwear, and let Bowland's early-morning quiet and woodland
magic guide you through an immersive winter nature session.

'Edgerow 'Arry - December's Tapestry of Heritage and Hope

In December, our Parish hedgerows wear winter's quiet cloak. Bare boughs of hawthorn and
hazel gleam with frost, while ivy berries ripen for thrushes and blackbirds. Beneath twisted
roots and leaf-littered banks, mice scurry and foxes pass unseen but leave their marks in mud
and snow. These boundaries, still teeming with life, hold echoes of our past.

Long before Christmas lights twinkled, these hedgerows marked sacred lines, honoured by
Brythonic, Anglo-Saxon and Norse settlers as thresholds between worlds. Holly's sharp leaves
and bright berries once warded off evil; ivy bound hopes to hearth and kin. As Christianity
reached our valleys, these same evergreens became symbols of peace and enduring light
around the time of Winter Solstice.

In our rural parish, this legacy lingers. The hedgerows remind us that even in the bleakest
season, life endures. At Christmastide, when church bells ring across moor and field, we gather
as generations before us did—thankful, watchful, and quietly joyful beneath December's sky.

Lancashire Christmas traditions

Old Lancashire Christmas traditions were rich in warmth, song, and seasonal cheer. Homes
were decorated with holly, ivy, and yule candles, while wassailing—singing festive songs from
house to house—echoed through mill towns and hamlets. Mummers performed folk plays
with stock characters like St George and the Turkish Knight, blending pagan roots with
Christian storytelling. Special puddings and spiced ale were shared after midnight services, and
children left stockings by the hearth, hoping for an orange or a coin. Many customs, from Yule
logs to carol singing, reflected ancient midwinter rites, passed down through generations and
rooted deeply in local faith and folklore.

Bin - Collection - which Thursday in December?...

Red bin every week and...

4th	December	Blue
11th	December	Green & paper
18th	December	Blue, & paper
c.25th	December	Blue, Green & paper
C.1st	January	Blue



The Heavens above Downham in December...

Prominent Planets, Stars and Constellations

Jupiter will be a spectacular evening object, rising into the east and climbing high under the constellation Gemini.

Saturn is also visible in the evening sky, though lower on the horizon and best observed early in the month. The only gas giants invisible with the naked eye in December are Uranus and Neptune.

The inner planet Mercury makes a terse appearance before sunrise in early December, low to the southeast.

As for stars, look out for Aldebaran (the red “Eye of the Bull” in Taurus) and the rising constellation Orion—both forming part of a classic winter sky.

The bright star Capella in the constellation Auriga (the charioteer) remains prominent in the northern sky throughout the month

Phases of the Moon for December...

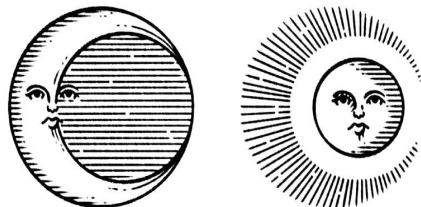
Full Moon: 4th December at 23:14 BST

Last (Third) Quarter: 11th December at 20:51 BST

New Moon: 20th December at 01:43 BST

First Quarter: 27th December at 19:09 BST

The **Full Moon in December** is commonly known as the **Cold Moon**. The name reflects the onset of winter’s deep chill, as December brings longer nights and the first hard frosts. It is also known as the **Moon Before Yule** and also the **Long Nights’ Moon** – used in some traditions to reflect the longest nights of the year near the Winter Solstice.



Comet 3I/Atlas: Celestial Celebrity or Christmas Cameo?

Comet **3I/Atlas** has swept into the headlines like a true celestial celebrity: bright, mysterious, and with better publicists than most politicians. Astronomers call it an interstellar visitor; many wonder whether it’s a harbinger for dramatic press releases about UFO disclosures that may arrive before the Epstein files ever see daylight.

Some even whisper that this icy wanderer might be a modern “star from the East,” arriving fashionably early for Christmas. If so, it’s a pity the UK government seems to be running perilously low on wise men - green or otherwise.

But whether it brings revelations, obfuscations, or simply a beautiful streak across the winter sky, 3I/Atlas reminds us that the universe is far bigger, and far stranger, than our earthly realm. Frankly that’s a rather comforting prospect.



Those Were the Days we Remembered

An enjoyable evening at Downham Village Hall was well attended as we paid tribute to Kirsteen, and all our friends and family who performed various roles in the two concerts held in 1982 and 1989, that are sadly no longer with us.

With lots of help from Kenneth Swarbrick we watched expertly edited footage of the two concerts, laughed at the sketches and sang along with the songs from the good old days. With ticket sales, a raffle, a bar and copies of the concerts available for sale we are very pleased to announce that we raised £565 to be split between the Village Hall Funds and the British Heart Foundation. Thank you to all who attended, donated and helped us in any way. Anne and Michelle.

Making more happy memories this Christmas...

As we head towards the busy festive season please make room in your calendars for some of the more traditional Christmas services that we have planned:

The festivities begin with our Carol Singing at The Assheton Arms on Friday 19th December at 6pm, where we can all join in singing along with traditional well known Christmas Carols. Then our Sunday service on the 21st December, at 11.15am, will be a combined Nativity Play and Christingle service, everyone is welcome, especially children who would like to take part in the Nativity Tale. Christingle oranges will be provided during the service.

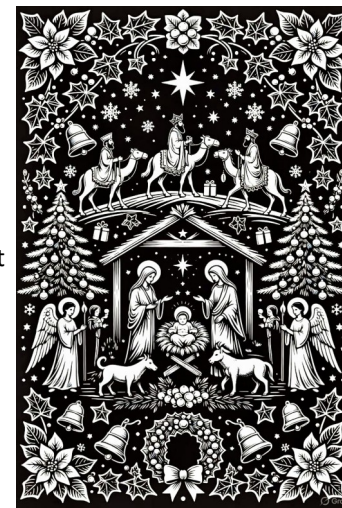
Our Annual Nine Lessons and Carols service will be held on Sunday 28th December, 11.15am, this year with two choirs joining our own SBTC, as our former Curate Chris called us the 'Small, But Talented Choir', to sing Traditional Christmas Carols and Anthems alongside passages from the Bible read by members of the community. Again, everyone welcome. AC

Advent

To some of a certain age, Advent invokes the candle-based creation heralded by the 1970s Blue Peter tradition of 2 coat hangers bound with flammable tinsel. However, its true meaning is as the season of watchful preparation that begins four Sundays before Christmas. Rooted in Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming", it marks both the anticipation of Christ’s birth and the promise of His return. Traditionally observed with candles, readings, and reflection, Advent invites us to pause amid winter’s hush and consider hope, peace, joy, and love. It is a time to ready our hearts—not only for the nativity at Bethlehem, but for Christ’s presence in daily life. In today’s fast-paced world, Advent offers a counterbalance: a gentle call to stillness, expectation, and the sacred rhythms of the Christian year.

Treasuring Nature

At Yuletide, spare a thought for the wild ones who share our winter world. Leave seed and fresh water for birds, a quiet corner of leaves for hedgehogs, and avoid tidying the garden too much—nature finds shelter in the mess. In giving space, we honour the season’s quiet generosity.





St Leonard's Day

Despite it being a gloomy and slightly damp morning, a dozen stalwarts turned out to help with tidying the Churchyard and the less frequently cleaned parts of the Church itself. For once we managed to trim all four of the lime trees (there isn't always time) and strip some ivy off the walls. Inside, all the chairs had a thorough clean and the wicker ones were given their annual Woodworm inspection. Many thanks to all who joined in.

Safeguarding

Once again, there have been no reported safeguarding issues

Rev Paul Sherwood

With joy and ceremony Paul was sworn in by Bishop Philip at St Mary's on Wednesday 27th November. We are very much looking forward to getting to know him over the coming months.

Rev Chris Hegg

With sadness and no great ceremony, Chris has recently announced his decision to leave the Church of England. It has been a joy to see Chris progress through his training for the Ministry over the last few years and we are really grateful for his hard work on our behalves, especially during the Interregnum. We wish him well as he opens a new chapter of his Christian journey.

15 Old Well Hall

Welcome to Laurie and Eleanor who have just moved in.

Bonfire Fireworks

5th November started off wet and windy, but by the evening it was perfect for enjoying the sights and sounds of a traditional Bonfire Party! The fire lit quickly and provided a suitably scaled focus for the fun. The fireworks were launched without hitch, thanks to Phil and Dan. Particular thanks go to Barbara, who purchased the pyrotechnics, after hours of on-line research. Many thanks also to the Village Hall Committee and the team from Greendale, for organising the tasty sausages-in-a-bun and hot drinks. A really fun evening for all, which raised £1,500 for ongoing repairs and improvements at the Village Hall.

Carol singing Friday 19th December: Assheton Arms 6pm

To start off Christmas week, why not join in with some carol singing outside (and perhaps later – inside) the pub? We provide the song sheets, you just need to dress appropriately for the weather and ideally bring a head torch. Come and go as you please.

Rainfall

After the dry start to the year, we have been gradually catching up, so that by mid November we have had 34.09 inches against an average of 40 up to the same point. We have passed the driest year (1933 with 28.44 inches). We have some way to go to reach our average of 45.18 inches, but who knows...

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Christmas decorating Sat 20th December 2pm

As is our custom, we decorate the Church on the Saturday before Christmas. Do come along for a few minutes to help make the building look suitably festive? No great skills are required, but many hands do make light work.

Nativity and Christingle Sunday 21st December 11.15am

This year we are experimenting with a combined Nativity and Christingle service. instead of our regular Prayer Book service. This will be Warden led, so rest assured that it will be a speedy and family focussed affair! We will need volunteers for the performance, and as there are no rehearsals and no lines to learn this will suit all ages and abilities. If you can bring your own costume, so much the better, but if not we have spare angel's wings, sheep's fleeces, wise men's crowns etc.

Christmas Day Thursday 25th December 11.15am

Our Christmas Day service will be one of Communion, but everyone is very welcome to attend, whether or not you ever attend at other times of the year.

9 Lessons and Carols Sunday 28th December 2025 11.15am

Our service this year will hopefully include some additional choristers from St Mary's. Apart from that, the format will follow that of previous years, as we hear again the Christmas story, told in Bible readings and carols.

Bell ringing Tuesday evenings 7pm

The Church bells will fall silent during Advent (except for the clock), as they do each year at this time, so anyone who is interested in joining the band will have to find us in the Club House (aka The Assheton Arms) to try their hand at handbell ringing instead. Practises in Church resume in the New Year.

Benefits of dry fuel on your fire.

When the weather turns cooler, the temptation to burn the wood you've collected from a tree that came down increases. A recently felled tree can contain over 60% moisture. A 1kg freshly cut log could contain around one pint of water.

It's important to ensure the wood is sufficiently dry to burn efficiently and safely.

Dry wood burns hotter, ignites more easily, creates less smoke and doesn't cause creosote build-up in your stove & chimney.

Burning dry wood means less maintenance, better air quality and a more consistent fire.

The optimum moisture content of wood being burnt on a stove is 12-20%

Look for the Ready to Burn logo which guarantees the wood has been tested and complies.

