New Vestments Blessed and Dedicated on Advent Sunday

On Sunday 1 December we were delighted to receive and bless a donation from Cynthia and Alex Hunt of two new sets of vestments for sacramental worship in the church. As many of you may know, Cynthia has for several years served as our sacristan at the 8.00 am Book of Common Prayer service of Holy Communion, preparing and looking after the vessels, elements, and the altar for this service. Cynthia's husband Alex sadly died earlier this year, and these vestments are given to the church in his memory.

The vestments are made by Watts & Co. of London using the Davenport brocaded fabric. This is combined with Y orphreys in Watts narrow Red Gothic Trellis braid to produce a beautifully authentic Gothic Revival-style vestment, cut to an ample shape. The chasuble is lined in cotton sateen. Each set of vestments (chasuble and stole) was presented with a matching burse and veil, used to cover the sacred vessels before and after the celebration of the Eucharist.

The white and gold vestments are used on our most special occasions, the high feast days of the church, such as Easter and Christmas. They may also be worn on All Saints Day and perhaps if a service of baptism is to include a celebration of the Eucharist.

The rose vestments are worn on Gaudete Sunday (the third Sunday in Advent) and on Laetare Sunday (the fourth Sunday in Lent). During these seasons of waiting and penitence, when purple is normally worn, the rose-coloured vestments indicate a day of celebration. In contrast to the more austere elements of these seasons, the lighter colour and themes of 'rejoicing' (Gaudete and Laetare both mean 'rejoice') remind us that Christ is our hope and we live in the light of the Resurrection.

It was especially fitting that these gifts were made on the first Sunday of Advent, a day when we traditionally bring in gifts and place them around the altar. We therefore gathered at the nave altar at the 8.00 am service, sprinkled the new vestments with holy water, and made the following prayer to God:

Almighty and eternal God, who through your servant Moses commanded vestments to be fashioned for the honour of your name, that the High Priest, priests and levites might fittingly stand before your face to worship you, in your goodness heed our prayer. Through our humble ministration bless + these priestly garments and pour out grace upon them; that they may be vestments henceforth, blessed for use in the sacred ceremonies of your worship. And as your bishops and priests wear these sacred vestments, may they find strength against the onslaughts and temptations of the devil. May they worship you worthily and well, giving themselves wholly to your service and finding therein their never-ending joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our sincere thanks to Cynthia for this very generous donation in memory of her beloved husband Alex.

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