

York Minster's spectacular Advent Wreath, will be suspended below the Minster's Central Tower today marking the beginning of the Christian festival of Advent and Christmas at the Minster.

The wreath is assembled around a vast and heavy three metre wide, metal ring with built-in channels to hold the water required to keep the foliage fresh. The structure also features five one metre high candle holders. It takes the Minster's expert team of volunteer flower arrangers almost two hours to transform the metal ring into a spectacular, abundant display, overflowing with fresh, evergreen winter foliage. This year's display will be mainly of ivy, kindly donated from the gardens of internationally renowned flower arranger George Smith.

For Head Flower Arranger, Mandy Barker and her team, dressing the Advent Wreath is one of the most important challenges of the year. Mandy said: "Between us, we've had plenty of practice assembling and installing the advent wreath and getting creative with the seasonal foliage that we can find. It is just wonderful to see it come together and to produce a display which is so important for the Minster's Advent and Christmas celebrations."

Decorating the wreath this year will also provide an important social occasion for the Minster's flower arrangers. Mandy said: "There are volunteers who come to help who have been coming along for the last 30 years. It is a really lovely occasion and we all take great pride and satisfaction in making a wonderful display."

Once the wreath is complete, children from St Peter's School, York, will arrive at the Minster to help Head Verger Alex Carberry, lift four one metre high candles into position on the wreath and watch as Alex lifts the fifth candle into its central position. The wreath will then be hoisted into position below the Central Tower. The first candle will be lit on Sunday 28 November (the first Sunday of Advent), and then on three successive Sundays with the final candle being lit at the Christmas Day Eucharist service.

Canon Victoria Johnson, Precentor said: "After two difficult and challenging years, the raising of this wreath and the hope that it brings, is more poignant and wonderful than ever. The lighting of each candle brings us ever closer to the joy of the birth of the Christ child and the bringing of His light into the world."



Anthony Chappel Ross

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