

St. David's Church Exeter and S. Michael's and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter.

Newsletter for 3 January 2021 – The Second Sunday of Christmas

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year and welcome to this second Sunday of the Christmas season. We will be live streaming the 9.30am service from St David's Church on our Facebook page and it should appear later on our websites.

Today at 9.30am I will be celebrating at St David's and Belinda Speed Andrews will be preaching. The service will be celebrating the Epiphany and there will be a blessing of the chalk ceremony at the start of the service. Chalk will be available to collect at the end of the service for you to mark your own homes should you wish to do so.

At St Michael's at 11am Fr Dominic Cyrus will be celebrating and preaching.

Forthcoming Services in church

Wednesday 6 January – Feast of the Epiphany

9.30am Matins (Book of Common Prayer) at St Michael's
7.30pm Sung Mass for Epiphany at St Michael's

Thursday 7 December

10.30 Holy Communion at St David's

Sunday 10 January – The Baptism of Christ

9.30am Parish Communion for Epiphany at St David's (live
streamed) with celebrant Belinda Speed-Andrews and preacher
Howard Friend

11am Mass at St Michael's with Nigel Guthrie and Howard
Friend preaching

Blessing your home with chalk

If you would like to bless your home at the beginning of the new year you can do so using the following form:

Use the blessed chalk to mark the lintel of your front door (or front porch step) as follows: 20 + C + M + B + 21 while saying:

The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar followed the star of God's Son who became flesh and dwelt among us. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the new year. Amen.

Then offer the following prayer: *Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness*

of your presence. Bless all who live or visit here with the gift of your love; and grant that we may show your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen us in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen

Advent and Christmas Services

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our services online and in person and to those who decorated and cleaned our churches.

Covid-19 Safe

These are the provisions we are making to keep worshippers as safe as possible.

Please avoid touching door handles – Thank you.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

We should now wear face coverings in church. There are important exemptions which can be found at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20face%20coverings%20v3.0.pdf>

and which include those with a hearing impairment.

At St David's we are encouraging people to wear face coverings to come forward to receive Holy Communion and then to consume the host after moving away from the altar rail.

Seating will be distanced to approximately 2 metres. Please sit on the seats where service books are placed. Seating is also marked by white labels at St Michael's, with notices on the pews that should be kept clear.

Please observe appropriate distancing from others at all times.

Services should be 'no longer than necessary'; and congregational singing is still not permitted indoors.

Please avoid mingling inside church before or after services.

Toilet facilities will be available and please follow the instructions for use.

Please do not attend church if you are feeling ill or are shielding. Although we will do all we can to make the church safe you attend at your own risk.

Online Daily Prayers

Tuesday 5 January, Zoom Morning Prayer at 9.30am. You are welcome to join using the code below:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392 Passcode: 196651

Wednesday 6 January, 9.30am Prayer Book Mattins from St Michael's on the St Michael's Facebook Page

Thursday 7 January, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Friday 8 January, 9am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Food for vulnerable community housed at the Great Western Hotel

A big thank you for the help and donations that have been given towards making our Tuesday packed suppers. The scheme is set to continue until the end of March. We currently have plenty of chocolate bars but could do with some more crisps to see us through the next few weeks. We sent a small gift bag at Christmas as well as the usual Tuesday supper.

Work at St David's Church

Community Payback Volunteers are continuing to help with maintenance in St David's churchyard on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Their supervisor, Keith, is always happy for us to stop and chat (at a safe distance) with the group.

Traidcraft Stall & Bountiful Table

A big thank you to everyone who ran, supplied and supported the Bountiful Table at St Michael's last year. Elizabeth Hughes has had a count-up and the stall raised £1,123 during 2020 which is an amazing total considering the disruption we all faced!

Our stalls can continue now we are in Tier 3 of restrictions (we would have to review them if we were moved to tier 4). At our stalls please just approach one by one, keeping safely distanced, and do not touch products before buying. If at all possible please bring notes and coins that can be handed over without needing lots of change. Thank you for your support - and for taking care! Traidcraft at St David's will continue on the fourth Sunday of most months.

Magazine

Our magazine for December and January is still available, and it's a fabulous bumper edition to keep you interested and entertained. Paper copies are available in church and it is accessible through both our websites. A massive thank you to our contributors and editorial team for their creativity and hard work.

Phone Networks

Many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community. If you would like to be phoned by someone and haven't had any contact please let me know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com

or by ringing me on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519.

Congratulations!

John Laramy, the Principal of Exeter College has been awarded the CBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list for Services to Education. We are delighted that John's wonderful service and the continued success of our neighbours at Exeter College has been recognised in this way.

Your Prayers are asked for...

In the Parish Cycle of Prayer please pray for the Pastoral Visiting Team and those keeping in touch with others by phone.

A Prayer for the New Year

**Eternal Lord God,
we give you thanks for bringing us through the changes of time
to the beginning of another year.**

**Forgive us the wrong we have done in the year that is past,
and help us to spend the rest of our days
to your honour and glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Please also pray for:

**People here, and around the world, suffering from Covid-19, and those who are
feeling anxious or afraid;**

**our Government, local and national, in the difficult decisions they have to make
and implement, our police service, those carrying out the vaccination
programme;**

those to implementing new trade and travel arrangements with Europe;

school and college staff trying to plan the term amidst changing regulations

**those working in care homes and hospitals - giving thanks for their commitment
and courage;**

those who are facing unemployment or economic hardship;

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Prayers, Readings and Address for Sunday of Epiphany, 3 January

Collect

**O God, who by the leading of a star
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:
mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith,**

may at last behold your glory face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading – Ephesians 3: 1 – 12

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— for surely you have already heard of the commission of God’s grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 2: 1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.” ’

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that

the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

An Address by Belinda Speed-Andrews for Epiphany

We come together today having crossed the threshold of another new year, with hopes, dreams and maybe expectations for what the coming year will hold for us both individually and as a family in and with Christ. We have come together as we do every Sunday whether here in person or online, to re-centre our lives, our thoughts, our words and our actions to be in tune with Christ and in order to do that we may, like the wise men, end up going home by a another way because of what we have heard or experienced in this God-filled space.

How many of you enjoy watching a really good box set? I know I do as it is a way for me to enter into someone else's world and have a release from everything that is going on in mine. I love really long box sets, the more series there are in the box set the better; I know I now skip past anything that is less than 2 series long. It's the same as reading novels. I love reading sets of novels. I guess it's because I love to see how the characters develop but one almost becomes a part of the story wondering what is going to happen to the villain or wondering what is going to happen in the next episode. One set of novels that I enjoyed reading is the story about the London lawyer, Matthew Shardlake by C. J. Sansom based in Tudor times and it gives a really good insight to the state of the church then - and we think we have it bad!! There are 7 books in the series and having read them all a few years ago I am now revisiting them and listening to them on audible as I walk to and from work. I don't know about you, but I always feel bereft at the end of a series or a novel. I suppose it's because I have invested a lot of my time getting to know the characters, whether falling in love or loathing of particular characters and if there are some cliff hangers along the way all the better. These characters have become a part of my life if only briefly.

I want to suggest this morning that perhaps we approach the gospels, the whole Bible in fact, as if it is a series of the most amazing stories in which we ourselves are characters in the story. There's going to be love and hate, frustration and anger, a lot of violence, good characters and bad characters, and the stories are going to be full of adventure and discovery, and some fear and danger. And I for one won't mind investing a lot of my time re-visiting the stories - I pray that I will pick up new insights, have a renewed compassion and deeper understanding,

and what better place to start this amazing journey for that is what this is, than with the birth of a tiny baby, God incarnate. Let us follow him this year and really live the story and continue to live the story in our lives from day to day. For we, unlike the novel or the box set are absolutely a part of this continuing story, it doesn't end with the resurrection, it is an ongoing adventure. But I get ahead of myself! Let's start at the very beginning.

Today we celebrate Epiphany. But what if every part of the bible should be an Epiphany - a revelation of who God is and who God is in Christ which shows us how we can live our lives with the light of Christ at the centre, guiding us every step of the way. In the episode this morning, the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles, it wasn't the fact that these wise men came from afar having studied the skies for years. It wasn't the fact that they perhaps travelled so far, maybe taking them several years to reach their searched for destination. Nor was it the fact that they had the audacity to say to King Herod that we haven't come to worship you we have come to worship the one for whom we have heard about who is born King of the Jews, can you tell us how to find him? A crazy move by anyone's thinking. It's not even the fact that it is scripture, in fact Micah 5:2-4 read by those who know the law and the scriptures that confirms the science of astrology to the reality of the Christ-child, and yet the irony is they, the Pharisees and scribes still don't get it. What got me in this the first chapter of this box series is that the Kings in all their radiant exotic eastern splendour, knelt in awe and wonder and paid homage to this tiny, needy, suckling baby boy who they were convinced was the King of the Jews. And their gifts of gold frankincense and myrrh represented that awe & wonder. Words could not express those feelings but the gifts did - only the very very best.

Awe and wonder. Never mind that the 3 wise men may well be kneeling in dirty smelly straw, and that in their rich and splendid clothes they were the ones out of place, they had at last found who they had heard about long ago, had longed to find and yearned to see and now they are in the presence of the One. A couple of weeks before Christmas a friend of mine shared a video with me. It was a video of his 18 month old grandson seeing the Christmas tree lit up for the very first time. Imagine the look on his little face; it was literally a look of awe and wonder and joy and it was just so beautiful to witness. The little boy was not pretending, he was not putting it on for anybody else - it was a genuine response to what was before him; there were no words, words were not needed. It was if he was standing on holy ground. The three Kings response to at last seeing the King of the Jews, was to fall to their knees - 'at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth' (Phil 2: 10)

The other readings in the lectionary this morning too give us this sense of awe and wonder: Isaiah speaks in extravagant terms; ‘Kings, come to the brightness of your dawn.....then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice’ the Psalmist goes further in psalm 72; ‘May the Kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute....may all the kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.’ They all fall down before this child. And from Paul in the reading from Ephesians we can hear the passion Paul has for the awe & wonder of his personal epiphany, to bring the good news to all; ‘to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things’.

In hearing this part of the gospel again, a story we hear year after year have we perhaps lost the ability to fall down before this child in awe and wonder as the three wise men did 2000 years ago? We may not have the richest of gifts to offer, gold, frankincense and myrrh, but that does not mean that what we give him is not rich. We too like the wise men are on a journey; human life is a journey and we as Christians take this journey in search of the one who calls us beyond ourselves into faithful service - One before whom we are prepared to kneel in awe and wonder and offer the best of our gifts, flawed and unworthy as they may be. It may be gold we can give or a simple prayer, or perhaps a broken and hungry heart or eager hands and feet, or perhaps even bread and a meal shared together - these all may be our genuine response to the gift of life, lying here in a manger.

Today we watch as these visitors full of grace & dignity kneel before what is to them simplicity and vulnerability and poverty because in their wisdom they know that this is where glory resides hidden for now in this place and in this child. So I invite us all today to kneel beside these royal men on the stable floor in awe and wonder and offer our gifts. And may we in this season of epiphany and beyond be carried by the sense of awe and wonder and let it carry us through every situation as we offer our gift to the One who has gifted us with life.

Closing Prayer

Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek:
may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light
discern the glory of your presence in your Son,
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do join us next week for our services in church or on Facebook!