

St David's with St Michael's and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter Newsletter for the Sunday of the Epiphany, 2 January 2022

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year and welcome to this week's newsletter. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our Christmas worship and to those who decorated and cleaned our churches for the festival.

Thank you, also, for your help in keeping to our Covid regulations. In view of the continued Covid restrictions we encourage you to wear face-coverings in church unless you are exempt, to maintain social distancing and to use hand sanitizer on entering the building. We have suspended the offering of refreshments after services for the time being, but otherwise we plan to go ahead with our services as advertised. Please be patient, kind and respect the personal space of other people if they don't wish to get too close!

Our services today are:

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's with celebrant Nigel Guthrie and preacher, David James. (live streamed on St David's Exeter Facebook page)

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's with celebrant and preacher, Nigel Guthrie

4pm Thrive – on Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dlNCY3NRQTlCcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289 Passcode: 159821

6pm Evening Prayer at St David's Church with Belinda Speed-Andrews

6pm Choral Evensong and Benediction at St Michael's Church with Nigel Guthrie

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 4 January, 9.30 – 9.55am Morning Prayer on Zoom.

Please join us on this link:

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392 Passcode: 196651

6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's (live streamed on Friends of St Michael's Facebook Page)

Wednesday 5 January, 9.30am Mattins and said Requiem Mass at St Michael's

Thursday 6 January, Feast of The Epiphany, 10.30am Holy Communion at St David's Church

6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's Church (live streamed on Friends of St Michael's Facebook Page)

Friday 7 January, 9.30 Morning Prayer live streamed on St David's Facebook Page

Sunday 9 January – The Baptism of Christ

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's with celebrant Belinda Speed-Andrews and preacher, Nigel Guthrie. (live streamed on St David's Exeter Facebook page)

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's with celebrant Ash Leighton Plom and preacher, Nigel Guthrie

4pm Thrive – on Zoom

6pm Evening Prayer at St David's Church with Ian Cartwright

Covid-19 Safe for Public Worship

At St David's we encourage 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.

At St Michael's the priest will distribute Holy Communion to people in their seats. Seating will be distanced to approximately 2 metres. Please sit on the seats where service books are placed. Services should be 'no longer than necessary'.

Please mingle with care before and after services and be mindful not only of your own wellbeing but also of your neighbours' safety and make sure that you are not sitting directly behind other people especially if you would like to sing.

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.

Men's Breakfast

The next Men's Breakfast will be next Saturday 29th January at 10am at the Farmers' Union. Please contact Nigel if you would like to be on a mailing list reminder for this.

NRSV bibles for St David's

Do you have an NRSV version of the bible at home which you don't use? If so we would be delighted to give it a home at St David's Church. We would like to have a few copies at the back of church for those who would like to follow the readings which will be written up on the white board at the back of church. Thank you.

Phone Network and Home Communion

If you would like to be phoned by someone from the church community or know someone who would appreciate Communion at home, please let Nigel know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com or by ringing him on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519.

St Michael's services and prayers

If you would like to access the service details and prayer list for St Michael's please contact Oliver Nicholson at virtualsaintmichaels@gmail.com and he can add you to that weekly mailing.

Your Prayers are asked for...

Please remember those who are suffering

Please remember those who have died recently including:

John Darch

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer**: St David's Pastoral Visiting Group and WhatsApp prayer group. All who care for others in our parish.

Please also pray for:

St Petrock's outreach work with rough sleepers in Exeter;
purposeful follow-up from the COP26 conference;
those worried about the rising costs of energy and housing in this country;
for integrity and good leadership in our national life;

those suffering in Afghanistan through lack of food and medical facilities;
the people and animals of East Africa (N Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia) suffering from prolonged drought;
the worldwide Covid vaccination programme, and the roll-out of booster vaccines;
those working in care homes, hospitals and hospices;
those suffering from Covid around the world.

With every blessing,

Nigel Guthrie

Prayers, Readings and Address for the Sunday of the Epiphany, 2 January 2022

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 – Isaiah 60: 1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

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.

Address by David James for the Sunday of the Epiphany, 2 January 2022

‘Lift up your eyes and look around’, Isaiah tells us this morning, because ‘the glory of the Lord has risen upon you’.

Epiphanies, those disclosures of truth or of sudden understanding are all around us. These are the times when our experience leads us into a deeper understanding of ourselves or of the world around us. These are the ‘eureka’ moments of life when something has been discovered and you know that something important has been glimpsed, when you are moved to tears by joy, when you are conscious of the warmth of love, when the presence of something other - we would say of God - is maybe felt more than understood, sensed perhaps but not comprehended.

So lately I’ve been looking around and noticing what I take to be epiphanies. Here are some of them.

Alok Sharma was the minister given the task of chairing the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow in November. His epiphany came on a long-haul flight to one of his preparation meetings when he was flicking through the in-flight films. He came across one by Al Gore, the American politician, called *An Inconvenient Truth*. Although he doesn’t normally get through an in-flight film he watched this one twice. It’s about the impact of climate change. Sharma said, ‘It really was a light-bulb moment, I thought, “What is the impact of this on my kids - on other people’s kids?”’ When, after long hours of detailed negotiation an agreement was finally hammered out in Glasgow, he wept openly. Something had changed for him, deeply.

Then there was the epiphany in the cathedral. The dean, writing in the weekly sheet described it like this.

‘I sat down recently next to a man who was crying. “I’m not a Christian”, he said, “but there’s something about this place that has really got to me.” Frequently people are ambushed by the atmosphere. People come through the door seeking to admire the art and the heritage but they are touched by something greater than they can possibly imagine.’

Then there was Trudy Makepeace, a drug addict who is now an ordained minister in Bristol. Her epiphany happened like this.

‘A month before my final arrest I became open to the possibility of living hope in Jesus Christ; I prayed to receive God’s forgiveness and asked for his help.

As I did I experienced something I'd never known before: overwhelming love and acceptance, a sense of coming home. I felt peaceful and clean for the first time, instead of restlessness and anxiety. I was in complete disbelief; the guilt, regret and shame had vanished. I experienced freedom from the controlling power of drugs, lying, stealing and manipulation; it was miraculous.' *Abused, Addicted, Free* - her autobiography.

Matthew gives us the story of the wise men coming to look for Jesus. They, like most people in the ancient world, believed everything to be of a piece so that for them the earth and the heavens were intimately linked to each other. We're not so aware of the night sky these days with bright street lighting even in the countryside. But when you do visit a place which is truly dark at night you can't but be aware of the stars and the vastness of space beyond our little world. It gives a different and wider perspective on our lives, such that we might well say with the psalmist, 'What are mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you take notice of them?'

So the conviction that those wise men had that there were heavenly signs of something important happening was not strange to those who first heard the story when Matthew wrote it. But his readers, probably Jews, might have been surprised that this early revelation about Jesus' identity was first made to the gentile world. The magi were the first beyond Jesus' own family and people to have any inkling of who he was and would become: the king of the Jews. In this gospel it is also an outsider who first acclaim Jesus as God's Son when the centurion who watches him die on the cross suddenly has an epiphany that in this crucified outlaw he is also looking on God: 'Truly this was God's own Son.' The notice above Jesus' head, that here was the king of the Jews, was meant ironically. The centurion suddenly realised it was simply the truth.

That's the kind of human experience this great festival opens our hearts and minds to: the truth about God, about ourselves and about the world we live in.

We're still searching the heavens for meaning. On Christmas Day itself NASA in the US, in collaboration with space agencies in Canada and Europe, launched the James Webb Space Telescope, a new, more sophisticated version of the Hubble Telescope whose journey will take it even further than the magi's, some million miles into outer space. Its purpose? To explore the origins of galaxies, of life, even of the universe itself.

Indeed you might say that science is based on the premise that if you look carefully enough and long enough at the material universe around you it will reveal its inner secrets and deeper working - from outer space to viruses.

Our Christian faith speaks rather of an inner journey, which may take just as long and be quite as arduous, but is no less real and is also ultimately a search for meaning. As both St Luke and St Paul say, you don't have to go far, but you do need to go deep. The kingdom of God is within you.

It's also in the encounter with others in the world around us. At the end of his rule for Christian communities St Benedict stops at the door of the monastery, as it were, and speaks about the person who is responsible for greeting those who present themselves there. It's an important task because each arrival is both potentially an opportunity and a revelation because it is always an encounter with the other. Benedict is especially concerned about the welcome offered the poor because, he says, 'in them especially Christ is to be seen'.

Christ in the poor, the sick, the prisoner, the hungry. That's Matthew too: his parable of the sheep and the goats and the Lord who says, 'Whatever you did for the least of these you did for me too.' (Mt 25.40)

So that's the simple message I have for you at this Epiphany: lift up your eyes and look around. Expect epiphanies, they're not so rare as you might think. And then once seen, like the magi, you may find you take a different road, 'no longer at ease in [your] old dispensations' (Eliot *The Journey of the Magi*)

Post-Communion 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.

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