

St David's with St Michael's and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter

Newsletter for 10 January 2021 – The Baptism of Christ – The First Sunday of Epiphany

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this first Sunday of the Epiphany season when we celebrate the Baptism of Christ. This Sunday we give thanks for our own Baptism whenever and wherever it was. Even in this time when our nation is suffering so much it is good to remember God's goodness to us. He has shown us his favour in the coming of Jesus and has commissioned through Baptism us to bear his light in the world.

Today at 9.30am I will be celebrating at St David's and at 11am at St Michael's and Howard Friend will be preaching at both services.

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.

Thrive got off to great start during Advent and as it started on Zoom it is set to continue in the same format from this Sunday at 4pm. This session will explore some new hopes for the new year, as well as investigate secure ancient spiritual hopes from heroines and heroes of ages past...

The new log in details are below:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dINCY3NRQTlCcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

Response to Covid

Like many churches and places of worship we are looking hard at what we should be providing during this lockdown. Although places of worship can remain open it doesn't mean that they should. The Bishop of Exeter has put in place provision for Public Worship to be suspended if the PCC agree and our PCC will be meeting by Zoom on Tuesday evening to consider this question. If we do decide to suspend Public Worship we will let you know as soon as possible. If that is the case I would hope that we would be able to offer online worship as we have before and possibly also provide times when our churches can be open for private prayer. Please keep our Tuesday evening meeting in your prayers as we seek to discern what is the best course of action to care for our people.

Forthcoming Services in church - to be determined by PCC meeting.

Wednesday 13 January

9.30am Mattins (Book of Common Prayer) at St Michael's
10am Mass

Thursday 14 January

10.30 Holy Communion at St David's

Sunday 17 January – To be determined by PCC meeting

but definitely **Thrive at 4pm on Zoom!**

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 12 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 13 January, 9.30am Prayer Book Mattins from St Michael's on the St Michael's Facebook Page

Thursday 14 January, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Friday 15 January, 9am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Central Exeter Ecumenical Service Sunday 17 January, 7pm

There is often a pulpit exchange and ecumenical service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Unfortunately these are not possible this year so an online service has been prepared for us to share in with contributions from the city churches. Please join on Zoom through the link below:

Meeting [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81953088585?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81953088585?pwd=NHFEN2NXMnBKQlVuT3gxS0dzSUVnUT09)

[pwd=NHFEN2NXMnBKQlVuT3gxS0dzSUVnUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81953088585?pwd=NHFEN2NXMnBKQlVuT3gxS0dzSUVnUT09)

Meeting ID: 819 5308 8585

Passcode: 172992

Thank you from the Children's Society

We have received letters of thanks from The Children's Society this week to both of our churches – for the £190 raised by the Christingle Service at St David's and the £300 sent from St Michael's as part of their mission giving.

The Society write:

“It's thanks to the money raised in churches and congregations like yours that we are able to transform the hopes and happiness of thousands of children in this country who face abuse, exploitation and neglect and bring the full light of Christingle into their lives. Please extend our thanks to everyone who contributed towards this.”

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 still set to continue until the end of March. We currently have plenty of chocolate bars but would be glad of some more crisps. We sent a small gift bag at Christmas as well as the usual Tuesday supper.

Traidcraft Stall & St Michael's Bountiful Table

Unfortunately we are not able to run our regular stalls in church during the current lockdown but we hope to be able to keep them going through orders. Richard Featherstone is happy to take orders through his email address:

r.w.featherstone@gmail.com

these will be available for collection from the vicarage porch or elsewhere. Richard is also able to supply catalogues giving a full range of Traidcraft items.

Elizabeth Hughes has offered agreed to take orders for baking in aid of St Michael's Church funds through her phone 01392 259878. These will be for collection, rather than delivery to church.

Thank you to them both for their generosity in keeping these stalls going in difficult circumstances.

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.

Scam Alert from NHS Devon

There have been reports of a new scam where a person receives a text saying they need to book a vaccination appointment and it takes them to a fake NHS form, which then asks for their bank details to prove their identity. **The NHS will never ask for people's banking information.**

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, or would just like to talk, please let me know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com or by ringing me on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519.

Your Prayers are asked for...

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer** please pray for those baptized during the past year and the churches where we were baptised.

A Prayer for the Covid Pandemic

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour,
and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you.

In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful,
to tend the sick and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love,
for your name's sake. **Amen.**

Please also pray for:

an orderly and peaceful transition of power in The United States of America

people here, and around the world, suffering from Covid-19, and those who are feeling anxious, isolated or afraid;
our Government, local and national, in the difficult decisions they have to make and implement, our police service, those carrying the vaccination programme;
those implementing new trade and travel arrangements with Europe;
school and college staff delivering online and in person teaching
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 the first Sunday of Epiphany, The Feast of the Baptism of Christ, 10 January

Collect

Eternal Father,
who at the baptism of Jesus
revealed him to be your Son,
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit,
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;
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 – Genesis 1: 1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Gospel Reading – Mark 1: 4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather

belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

An Address by Howard Friend for Epiphany 1 – The Baptism of Christ

Genesis 1: 1-5, Mark 1: 4-11

'Because you're worth it'. Has to be one of the most successful advertising slogans ever. Mostly I suspect because we all like to be affirmed. Because I'm worth it!!

Starter for 10 – which company are we talking about here?

L' Oreal – Paris

Bonus point question: What are the ingredient costs of that £100 bottle of perfume or after-shave Father Christmas brought you this year?

£5 (or thereabouts) (The rest is advertising costs as your TV viewing in the run up to Christmas will confirm)

So maybe you're not worth quite what you thought you were. (Self doubt plagues us all doesn't it – to a greater or lesser extent)

You have to hand it to these advertising companies though don't you. They know how to spin a yarn.

(I wouldn't mind betting there's a fair few of you who in the back of your minds still think 'Guinness is good for you'.

It isn't of course, at least not in the quantities that company hope that you'll drink to keep their shareholders happy. It pickles your liver, addles your brain and - whisper it not too loudly - makes you impotent.)

But let's return to the wonderfully affirmative – 'Because you're worth it'

That's more or less what God said about Jesus at his Baptism by John. – allowing for a bit of preachers licence. (OK – allowing for a lot of preachers' licence!)

This is my Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

They are wonderful words of love and affirmation – of endorsement if you like.

And note this - because it is very important – Jesus was at the very beginning of his ministry. He hadn't yet come through the Wilderness test, let alone the ups and downs of that journey which led to the final entry into Jerusalem and it's ultimate test. This wasn't praise for a job well done – it was the heartfelt affirmation of a Father to or about a Son.

It was not - as they say - Performance related Praise

(Sorry about that - you can groan if you like – we're all of us missing the Pantomime Season aren't we?)

But it's the antithesis of that thought I want us all to appreciate and remember this morning. God's love for us is unconditional, it's unmerited, there's nothing we can do to make God love us. In fact there's quite a lot we do which makes us wonder why he does persist with us, but he just does.

He believes we're worth it.

And that affirmation gives us the confidence of self worth, a self confidence that you can see in any loved affirmed person.

Lack of self worth, of self esteem is a huge problem for many in our society, perhaps particularly the young, who are bigger users of social media.

How many 'Likes' did that post produce.

Just how much should I airbrush that photo so that somebody will like me.

It's all about Image Image Image

And we forget that God made us in his own image and loves us as we are.

That's why I love the Genesis story.

7 times in that first chapter, corresponding to the mythical days - God created something and 'saw that it was good' And on the 7th day he made man and woman in his own image. 'And God saw all that he had made – and it was very good'

Look I don't know how you're feeling at the beginning of what promises to be a very challenging year. I don't know the factors in your life that make you feel no better than that £5 of ingredients masquarading as a £100 bottle of something special,

But I do know that you are made in God's image

I do know that:

God the Father loves you, God the Son died for you and God the Holy Spirit lives in you – BECAUSE as they say

NOT – YOU'RE FIRED

BUT - YOU'RE WORTH IT

Closing Prayer

Lord of all time and eternity,

you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father

in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:

by the power of your Spirit

complete the heavenly work of our rebirth

through the waters of the new creation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

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