

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

Newsletter for 17 January 2021 — The Second Sunday of Epiphany

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this second Sunday of the Epiphany season.

As you should have heard by now the PCC took the hard decision that due to the present high level of Covid infections in Exeter we should not hold public worship at the moment. A notice of suspension has now been received from the Bishop of Exeter.

So please join us today for our online worship. The link to our **Youtube service** is here:

<https://youtu.be/wYYwXywHKJ0>

Our recorded service includes an address by Jonathan Draper considering questions of freedom, choice and the consequences and possibilities they bring. Prayers are led by Helen Friend and readings are by Jenny Baker and Ash Leighton Plom. A special musical item today is a lovely setting of the celtic prayer 'You are the peace' composed by Richard Johnson, a choir member at St David's and recorded by the virtual choir.

At 10.30am we will hold a Zoom coffee for 40 minutes including an opportunity to chat in groups. Please join us, if you can, for a catch up. The link to click is here: [Join Zoom Meeting](#)

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

At 4pm **Thrive** will continue on Zoom with time for learning, discussion and prayer. Thrive is opening up our parish life to others and proving very enjoyable and rewarding so do give it a try! Please click here to join:

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

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

Central Exeter Ecumenical Service Sunday 17 January, 7pm (not 6pm as I wrongly announced on the Youtube service – sorry!)

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?pwd=NHFEN2NXMnBKQlVuT3gxS0dzSUVnUT09>
Meeting ID: 819 5308 8585 Passcode: 172992

Church Opening Times for Private Prayer

Thursdays: 10.30 – 11.30am at St David’s Church

Sundays: 9.30-10.30am at St David’s Church
 11am-12noon at St Michael’s Church

Covid-19 Safe for Private Prayer

These are the provisions we are making to keep you as safe as possible during Private Prayer.

Please avoid touching door handles – Thank you.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

Please leave your name and contact details with Track and Trace.

We should 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.

Please take an ‘I sat here’ notice and leave it on your seat so that others who come later can sit elsewhere.

Please observe appropriate distancing from others at all times.

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

Monday 18 January, Compline (Night Prayer) on St David’s Facebook Page

Tuesday 19 January, 9.30am Zoom Morning Prayer. 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 20 January, 9.30am Prayer Book Mattins from St Michael’s on the St Michael’s Facebook Page

Thursday 21 January, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David’s Facebook Page

Friday 22 January, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David’s Facebook Page

Please note that our neighbours at Exeter Cathedral (also closed for public worship) are also offering daily morning and evening prayer by Zoom and daily Sung Compline on their Facebook Page. You can sign up for their weekly newsletter if you would like access to their Zoom services.

Worship Resources

The leadership team are very aware of those who are unable to access online worship and we hope that you are receiving this bulletin to keep you in touch. Many of you will already be aware of the resources available through the BBC which are accessible to anyone with a radio or television. There is a service on Radio 4 just after 8am each Sunday morning which follows a variety of Christian traditions. Radio Devon also host a Sunday Morning service at a similar time as part of their breakfast show. Then there is Songs of Praise on BBC 1 which now happens around lunchtime on a Sunday at 1.15pm – perhaps watch it on catch-up to avoid indigestion! And Radio 3 offers the musical feast of Choral Evensong every Wednesday after the afternoon concert at 3.30pm with a repeat on Sunday at 3pm. If you have a favourite worship resource which you think others would appreciate please let me know and I can advertise it here.

Thank you from the Children's Society

We have received letters of thanks from The Children's Society 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 continue to arrive towards making our Tuesday packed suppers. The scheme is still set to continue until the end of March. We would now welcome donations of chocolate bars and crisps.

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.

Phone Networks

Many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community. If 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 our licensed ministry team: Nigel Guthrie, Belinda Speed-Andrews, Ash Leighton Plom, Howard Friend and Charlotte Townsend and those with permission to officiate: Bill Pattinson and Ian Cartwright and those clergy who regularly contribute to our worship and preaching: David James, Jonathan Draper, Robin Eastoe and Dominic Cyrus; also ordinand Adrian Butland who will be on placement with us from Ide and Alphington Parish.

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 Second Sunday of Epiphany, 17 January

Welcome to worship in the parish of St David and St Michael, Exeter.

It has been a week of dark news as the number of Covid deaths has risen and the pressures on our hospitals have grown. And there have been hard decisions for us in the parish as we decided to close the doors of our churches once again in view of the rising infection rate in Exeter.

But although our buildings are closed for worship are churches are not closed. I hope that our hearts will be lifted by our worship today as we share in the readings and address, the prayers and music of this service. We may be physically separated but we can be joined spiritually in prayer as members of the body of Christ.

Our Gospel reading reminds us that, with Christ, good things can come from unexpected places. No one expected the Son of God to be brought up in Nazareth. God is often revealed where least expect to find the divine. And the Spirit of God is always at work renewing and remaking us so that we can reveal more of his glory. Perhaps these strange days are all part of that?

I would like to lead an opening prayer and confession before offering the collect for this Sunday.

Prayer of Preparation

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Confession and Absolution

The grace of God has dawned upon the world through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own. Let us confess our sins.

God be gracious to us and bless us,
and make your face shine upon us:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

May your ways be known upon earth,
your saving power among the nations:
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You, Lord, have made known your salvation,
and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

The priest pronounces the absolution.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory;
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. Amen

First Reading – 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20

‘All things are lawful for me’, but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are lawful for me’, but I will not be dominated by anything. ‘Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food’, and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are

members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, 'The two shall be one flesh.' But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

Alleluia

Alleluia. Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations and believed in throughout the world. Alleluia.

Gospel Reading – John 1: 43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

An Address by Jonathan Draper for 17 January 2021, Epiphany 2: Choice

I'd like to begin this morning with a reminder of the beginning of our first reading from the 1st Letter to the Corinthians:

'All things are lawful for me,'

But not all things are beneficial.

'All things are lawful for me,'

But I will not be dominated by anything.

These are pretty apposite words in a time of pandemic and government rules and regulations. It's also how you work things out when principles clash. Of course you are free to behave as you like: you are British and have inalienable rights. On the other hand, especially in a time of pandemic, not all things are beneficial – to you and certainly not to other people. A question for us is: how do we avoid being dominated by anything, even our freedom, and so serve the world that God loves? Be free by all means, but don't let your freedom be a stumbling block – or a death sentence – for others. Adults negotiate the limits of their freedom for the sake of others, for no freedom is absolute.

Freedom is often partnered with choice: I am truly free when I can make choices between courses of action. And choosing can be a moral measure: what you choose – whether it is what to wear, what to eat, how to take a holiday, how to vote, or whatever – has consequences. Just doing what you please and paying no attention to the consequences is a sign of moral inadequacy, not a sign of moral strength. No choice is morally neutral. All choices have consequences, as those who invaded the Capitol Building in Washington – or incited them to do so – are discovering.

The Gospel reading for today centres on choice. Jesus had been in Bethany, not far from Jerusalem, where he had been baptised by John the Baptist and his public ministry had begun. 'The next day', according to John's Gospel, Jesus decided to go to Galilee, a journey of about 70 miles which I guess might have taken as much as a week. When he got there he found Philip and said to him 'follow me'. This is the fundamental choice presented to all people who encounter Jesus: to follow or not to follow. Each person who calls her- or himself a Christian has made that choice and chosen to accept the consequences of that choice. Because none of us can know the consequences of that first choice in full when we make it, some people fall away and choose not to follow any more when the consequences become clearer or difficult. But it is a real choice: Philip might have said 'no' and not gone to find his friend Nathanael, and then we would have been deprived of one of the great sceptical comments in the Bible or any other book. When Nathanael heard that Philip was all excited about Jesus from Nazareth, Nathanael's natural scepticism surfaces and he asks: 'can anything good come out of Nazareth?' It's often made me wonder what the reputation of Nazareth was in those days that made him react like that. I was about to say that it's a bit like saying 'Can anything good come out of ...', but then I thought I could possibly offend almost anyone listening by adding in any place at all, so decided – made the choice – not to. I assume no moral high ground by that, only self-preservation.

But Philip chooses to follow, and Nathanael, however reluctantly, chooses to go along to meet Jesus. Philip has not tried to convince Nathanael to follow too, and perhaps that is something that modern day followers can learn from too. It is not our job to convince people that following Jesus is the right thing to do for them. Our job, like Philip's, is simply to say 'come and see'; come and see for yourself, come and see what has made me choose the way I have; come and see the difference following Jesus has made to me and my community. We have to allow God and God's Spirit to do their work and not try to do it ourselves. Nathanael encountered Jesus and then made his choice.

Jesus had seen Nathanael sitting under a fig tree. Perhaps he was close enough to Philip and Nathanael to hear their conversation, for when Nathanael comes to meet him Jesus says, with what I always imagine was a smile on his face, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit'. Nathanael was, I guess, someone who spoke his mind, who was not going to be simply talked into anything but would make up his own mind. Jesus acknowledges Nathanael's integrity and does not push back at him. His encounter with Jesus led him to make his choice: he chose to follow.

On the whole NT scholars, on very little evidence, believe that Nathanael is also sometimes called Bartholomew: he's generally named with Philip in the various lists of the apostles, and where he isn't, Bartholomew is. Like most of the apostles, Nathanael is said to have suffered a martyr's death, and I guess this was a consequence that none of them foresaw when they chose to follow.

Up to this point, this is a reading out which I can make some sense. But then we come to the bit where Nathanael says to Jesus, 'Where did you come to know me?'. Jesus replies, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you'. At this point Nathanael goes into a positive rapture: 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'. There is quite a jump between saying I saw you under the fig tree to you are the Son of God, and I don't really get it. If this was a miracle instead of Jesus overhearing the conversation between Philip and Nathanael, then it is, as the great Methodist biblical scholar CK Barrett put it, a pretty trivial miracle, and hardly worthy of mention, let alone deciding that the miracle worker is the Son of God. If it is a case of Jesus overhearing their conversation, then it's an inexplicable over-reaction by Nathanael. This has led many scholars to think that this is not really a story about something that happened, but a series of symbols making a bridge between the old dispensation and the new, between being an Israelite who follows God with integrity and one who sees in Jesus a new way of being a faithful follower of God. If the fig tree is a symbol of plenty, then, my dear Gift of God (which is what

Nathanael means), you ain't seen nothin' yet. You will be like Jacob and see angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth.

Whatever the reality of the story, there seems to be two main things the writer of John's Gospel is trying to convey: one is about Jesus, and the other is about us. John's Gospel wants us to see that Jesus is the messiah – the one about whom Moses and the prophets wrote, the one that Nathanael sees as Son of God and King of Israel, the one who promises greater things to come. And much of the rest of the Gospel is about just that.

But John's Gospel is also always putting before us a choice: come and see, follow me. And the choice to follow is not made because you have believed enough things, or even believed them in the right way; the choice is not made because you are a good person or the right fit or privileged in some way. The choice can only be made, can only be real, can only have meaning when you come at it, like Nathanael, with integrity, with an open mind, and through an encounter with Jesus, however that comes. If the choice is real, it will have consequences. You will see the world differently, you will no longer, as St Paul puts it, be dominated by anything, you will act in ways that are beneficial; you will choose differently. Perhaps that's why I've always been uncomfortable with the questions at baptism which are all about what you believe. I think they should be about what you will do when principles clash, when the love that stands at the heart of the Christian faith comes into conflict with indifference or hate. What will you do, how will you choose? The questions aren't easy, and they will tax our best intentions all through our lives. But that's the choice and its consequences: seeing the world differently, seeing love and justice and peace and mercy at the heart of things. But in making it, perhaps we will, like Nathanael, see heaven opened and the glory of God here on earth.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

God of glory, you nourish us with your Word
who is the bread of life: fill us with your Holy Spirit that through us the light of
your glory may shine in all the world.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Christ the Son of God perfect in you the image of his glory
and gladden your hearts with the good news of his kingdom;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

Do join us next week for our services on Youtube and Facebook!

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