

## The Parish of St David, Exeter

### Parish Newsletter for Sunday, 12 January 2025

#### Our services this week at St David's:

#### **Sunday, 12 January 2025 – 1st Sunday of Epiphany – Baptism of Christ**

9.30am Parish Communion with celebrant, Jonathan Draper and a talk by Pam Stanley on the work of the Street Pastors (live-streamed via Facebook)

6 pm Evening Prayer led by Sarah Cumming

*Tuesday, 14 January, 9.00-9.30 am Zoom Morning Prayer*

Please join us using this link (*different from before*)

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77269635517?pwd=Lb40Ha9TejMxaaXMc7XrFokjutLaZ1.1>

Meeting ID: 772 6963 5517

Passcode: 0q5ZR4

*Thursday, 16 January, 10.30am Holy Communion led by Sarah Cumming*

#### **Sunday, 19 January 2025 – 2nd Sunday of Epiphany**

9.30am Parish Communion with celebrant, Mike Clark and preacher, Howard Friend (plus baptism)

6 pm Evening Prayer led by Robert Mitchell

For services this week at St Michael's and All Angels CD, please see:

<https://www.stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk/worship/>

## Message from the Vicar and Churchwardens

### 1. **Compilation of a New Electoral Roll**

Every six years we are obliged to draw up a new electoral roll. This means, unfortunately, that we have to ask everyone on the existing roll, as well as anyone else who would like to join, to fill out a new form. Further details below.

### 2. **Mike's sermon from last week**

Mike's sermon from last week with some important things for us to think about is included at the end of the email.

### 3. **Covid & flu: sensible precautions**

With Covid and flu very much about, a gentle reminder that if you are coughing/sneezing and/or feeling unwell, out of consideration for others, please refrain from attending church, and where possible, join us via the live-stream.

## Visiting and home Communion

If you would like to be visited or phoned by someone from the church community, please let Howard Friend know by ringing him on 07733 739453; for Communion at home, either for yourself or someone you know, please contact Ian Cartwright on 07813 795616.

## Parish lunch – Thursday, 30 January, @34

The first parish lunch of 2025 will be on Thursday, 30 January at Exeter College's @34 restaurant at 12 noon. A sign-up sheet and menu are available at the back of the church. Please sign up by *Sunday, 26 January 26*. A group will be walking over from the church at 11.45, for anyone who doesn't know the way. Thanks, Sue Wilson and Jenny Baker

## Compilation of a New Electoral Roll

Every six years we are obliged to draw up a new electoral roll. This means, unfortunately, that we have to ask everyone on the existing roll, as well as anyone else who would like to join, to fill out a new form. These are available at the back of church or electronically by contacting [electoralrollofficer@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk](mailto:electoralrollofficer@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk)

This will need to be done fairly promptly so that all is in order before the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

Membership of the electoral roll is our opportunity to play a part in the decision making of the church and enables us to vote for the church officers and stand for office ourselves. It is also useful in determining numbers of those who worship here. It is open to anyone over the age of 16, who is baptised and a member of the Church of England, and who either lives in the parish or has habitually attended at St David's over the last six months. Please see either Sue Wilson or Alice Francis if you would like to know more.

**Buildings Team** – thank you to the several people who have offered to help and be part of the team. There's always room for more and a copy of the terms of reference are on one of the noticeboards at the back. Do have a look and think about whether you could offer help.

**Parish Magazine** – the bumper December/January edition is available so do pick up a copy. The deadline for articles for the February edition is *Sunday, 19 January 2025*. Please note there is a new email address: [newleaves@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk](mailto:newleaves@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk)

### **Tuesday Friendship Café**

St David's Church is normally open on Tuesday mornings from 10.30 am to 12 noon as a drop-in for people to find a Christian welcome and company. All welcome.

## Wednesday Walks

Wednesday walkers meet and enjoy convivial conversation, gentle strolls, the changing of the seasons and a coffee together. Would you like to join us? We'd make you very welcome! We meet at 9am at the door at the west end of St David's and we leave promptly. If you'd like to join us please just turn up, or speak to Helena in church.

## Knit and Natter

Please see Glynis for details of future meetings.

## Men's Breakfast

The next Men's Breakfast will be advertised early in 2025. Please contact Alan Baker if you would like a reminder [alan.baker1963@outlook.com](mailto:alan.baker1963@outlook.com)

## From the Green Team

Plough Sunday – 12 January: The observance of Plough Sunday on the First Sunday of Epiphany goes back to Victorian times, but behind it there is a much older observance, associated with the first working day after the twelve days of Christmas, hence 'Plough Monday' in some places. In medieval times some ploughs were kept in the parish church, and some churches kept a 'plough-light'. In days when work was scarce in winter, the observance looked forward to the time of sowing with the promise of a harvest to come. Some Christian communities have reintroduced it as a focus for asking a blessing on human labour near the start of the calendar year.

RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch 24th - 26th [Big Garden Birdwatch](#)

RSPB Big Schools Bird Watch 7th and 14th [Big Schools' Birdwatch 2025](#)

**Request for help with research from a student** – “Hi, I am Jasmine. I am a third-year undergraduate student at Exeter University, studying Anthropology. For my dissertation project, I will be studying St David’s Church to help me answer my dissertation title ‘Exploring the ability of individuals, over the age of 60, to talk about their health and well-being, particularly in light of their religious beliefs.’ (working title). With all data I collect anonymised, I shall complete observations and semi-structured interviews with volunteers from St David’s Church congregation. If you would like to get in contact with any questions about this study or to become a participant, please email: [jj530@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:jj530@exeter.ac.uk) or chat with me after the Sunday Morning Service. Thank you for having me!”

**The Iron Bridge – early notice of closure** – we gather that the bridge is going to be closed for major works from *13 January 2025 for 22 weeks*, with all the disruption that will bring.

**Your Prayers are asked for...**

**those who are suffering including:**

Caroline Speed-Andrews; Ann Barnet, Maggs Bedford; Delia Bloom; Libby Clapham; Andrew Francis; Hazel Gowland; Roger Luscombe; Anne Smith; Sarah Wood; Clive and Jeanie; Beth; Charlotte, Paul and Grace; Will, Dave

**those who have died recently**

**In our Parish Cycle of Prayer please pray for:**

Baptism Sunday, all those baptized during the past year; St David’s pastoral visiting team and Whatsapp prayer group

**Please also pray for:**

Our church

Our country and its leaders, both political and religious; for all those affected by the ongoing weather and those trying to put things right

Our world, for wisdom for its leaders and a wish for peace not war

**Sunday, 12 January 2025 – 1st Sunday of Epiphany – Baptism of Christ**

**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.

**1st reading - Acts 8.14-17**

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

### **Gospel Reading - Luke 3.15-17, 21-22**

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

### **Post Communion**

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.

**Amen**

### **Sermon by Mike Clark for Sunday, 5 January 2025**

ISA 60:2 See, darkness covers the earth

and thick darkness is over the peoples,

but the LORD rises upon you

and his glory appears over you.

ISA 60:3 Nations will come to your light,

and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

What did those words mean to the people of Israel who, hundreds of years before Christ faced the fact that their beloved Jerusalem had been destroyed, the temple was no more, and most of them lived far away in Babylon?

Things had gone very badly wrong. As far as they were concerned darkness indeed covered the earth and its people.

What would the future bring? Would they just live in fear? Or was there reason to hope?

Well, God promises through Isaiah that light will come.

Jerusalem will not always be dust, but will be rebuilt, and the nations will come, not to destroy, but to see God's light.

In our gospel reading, sometime after Jesus is born, we read of foreigners who have indeed seen a light rising, and in an unexpected way, begin to bring fulfilment to Isaiah's vision.



The wise men, or Magi, probably came from Babylon. They were astrologers, scientists, and priests rolled into one. They may well have been influenced by some of the Jewish exiles in Babylon centuries before and so may have known something about the Jewish faith and the Jewish hope for a saviour and king from David's line.

So, as we look once again at this familiar story, this morning I am thinking particularly about the reaction of Herod to the news that the Magi brought.

Herod was of mixed Jewish and Arab ancestry but was basically a puppet King put in place by the Romans. This Herod was known as Herod the great. He did do some great things! For example, he built a new Temple in Jerusalem, part of which is still standing today.

He had all the power and wealth that anyone could desire, but it made him terribly insecure, and he repeatedly acted out of fear.

Fear that his position may be threatened led to him having killed one of his wives, her mother and three of his own sons. Emperor Augustus commented that it was safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son.

Although it is reported only in the bible, we can see that it is totally consistent with Herod's character that would have all the little boys of Bethlehem killed to make sure he got rid of this baby King.

He clung with all he had to the earthly power and status that he had been given and acted out of fear of losing what he had.

So, what does this mean to us?

We are not kings or rulers, but we have the same sort of temptation as Herod- to act out of fear, or to let fear hold us back.

A year ago, we welcomed into our home our cocker spaniel, Pepper. She was six years old at the time. Over the first few weeks we discovered that she must have suffered some bad treatment. She would easily become scared of people- particularly if they had a walking stick. Her 'Fight or flight' flight reaction kicks in. She chooses fight! Or at least loud barking. She responds regularly out of fear.

We also have a fight or flight reaction in us. It can misfire- a system designed to keep prehistoric humans safe from the sabre tooth cat hiding in the grass now looks for danger everywhere leading to fear and anxiety which can affect our decision making. If that applies to you then it may benefit you to get some help in dealing with anxiety and fear in a way that does not hold you back from living fully.

But fear and anxiety do not just affect us on a personal level, but together as a church.

In my years of ministry as a parish priest and then as a member of diocesan staff I have seen many churches, met many PCCs, many churchwardens, many clergy.

Sometimes what I encountered would give me optimism, sometimes not.

You might think this would be down to whether or not the church had a large congregation, or lots of children and young people, or plenty of money in reserve, two good churchwardens and a strong PCC. But that wasn't it.

The key thing that would push me towards optimism or pessimism, would be whether they were guided and motivated by fear, or by hope.

Fear of change, fear of losing something important to us, fear of the unknown. All of these lead to defences going up and a loss of hope. Churches might possibly forget their purpose and become focused on self-preservation. And this can lead to the fight response not dissimilar to that of King Herod or our dog!

When I was asked by the Archdeacon to be licensed as interim incumbent here, I was given the task, not just of signing a piece of paper to enable St David's and St Michael's to walk separately and more positively into the future, but to help St David's discern its vision and purpose before a future permanent appointment.

I have to say, at the start of this new year, that I am full of optimism and hope.

I have loved being part of this church so far and so encouraged by the many positive things that happen here.

Beautiful worship on a Sunday, an inclusive gathering of people that is a safe place to explore questions of faith and life where asking questions is seen as a positive thing not a negative and we can live with a diversity of theological understanding.

A beautiful building that is so well looked after by many hardworking people. A building that is alive and is used every day and in many ways that benefit the wider community.

The pastoral care that happens in the parish and those that head that up.

The support for those on the margins with food parcels being prepared weekly for those who need them.

Sorry if I have missed something crucial that you are involved in- I am still getting to know people and what goes on!

And that is just what is happening now!

What opportunities are there to support those on the margins, to support the work of the prison chaplaincy team, to work with students in the college and university, to welcome more people into this place?

Yes – I know - before I get carried away that it is all very well having good ideas, but do we have the people to do it all?

Time will tell. If we focus not on our fears but on hope- the hope that is revealed in the Epiphany to the whole world- then why shouldn't this church grow? Why shouldn't this church shine brightly with the light of Christ? The Christ who shows us how to act out of hope and not fear.

So, as I come to a close-

Please talk to me- What are your fears that could hold us back or lead us to respond destructively rather than constructively?

And of course, talk to me about your hopes for this church, where might God be leading us?

In what ways might we shine brighter?

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please tell us at [notices@stdavidschurhexeter.org.uk](mailto:notices@stdavidschurhexeter.org.uk)

Please send notices/content/prayer requests or amendments to Hilary on [todd.stdandm@gmail.com](mailto:todd.stdandm@gmail.com))

(All readings can be found via Oremus Bible Browser: <https://bible.oremus.org/> in the New Revised Standard Version (anglicized edition))