

Virtual Church News

3 January 2021

2nd Sunday of Christmas

Epiphany

Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or call Jacqui on 356993.

Message from Christopher Dawe

This week we celebrate the Feast of Epiphany. The proper date for it is January 6th, but most churches these days keep it on the nearest Sunday. What's the Epiphany about? My old Book of Common Prayer calls it *The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles*. That sounds a rather stuffy name but it points to an important truth: God was reaching out to include outsiders in his message of joy brought to the world through Jesus' birth. If you have received or sent any Christmas cards, it's almost certain that one will have an image of a baby in a stable, and one will have an image of three kings.

The story has been overlaid with a lot of legend, but it is thought that the 'kings' were philosophers or priests from Persia who sought truth through study of the stars. Somehow they were guided to Jerusalem and there they asked about the birth of the king of the Jews, which upset king Herod somewhat, but enquiries were made and they were sent to Bethlehem and found the child Jesus. There they offered him three gifts, each pointing to a significant truth about him. Gold, a gift for a king, Frankincense, a gift for a priest, and Myrrh for one who is to die. A king rules a state and so ensures our safety. A priest is one who builds a bridge between us and God, and remember, if you didn't know it, that Jesus is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (look up *Hebrews* chapter 5). The Myrrh pointed to the death that earns our salvation.

This story and the truths it points to, seem to me to be so appropriate for today's troubles in society. Climate change, Brexit, Covid, and global power struggles. To sort these problems out we need to respect each other and work together – for we are, all of us, God's creation.

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A Reading for the Week

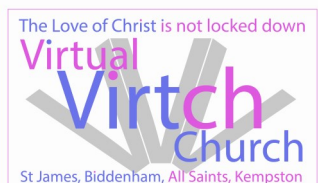
Matthew 2:1-12

²In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, '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.' ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the ruler of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then 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.' ⁹When 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. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On 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. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Virtch

Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



Message from Christopher *continued*

Covid in particular has brought people together in a way not seen since the last world war. It has separated us, yes, but we have done our best to get round these separations. It has shown us all that money, status, power, are nothing compared with knowing and loving and touching each other. In my road I now know people I would never had known but for Covid.

Thank you, God, for the people who provide *Whatsapp*. The truth is that God has given us two Gifts: Himself – with life in all its wonder set in an astonishing universe, and each other.



When the Covid problem is sorted, we really must not retreat behind our posh garden fences, cars or restaurants and become strangers to our neighbours. We will, as I hope, be free to mix - let's do it! The other thing that Covid has shown is that we really must remove the wealth, health and educational differences between parts of our country, and indeed the world as well. We're all in this together.

One more thing. If you are one of those who think this is all very fine, but in time, when we have shed this mortal coil, it will count for nothing, I urge you to think again.

Why? Because I think that Jesus, in creating the universe, including himself as part of it as a human, guarantees our existence. If humankind eternally exists in Jesus, then we must be part of it, otherwise He would end up being alone as a human being, (which he is) and always will be.

God Bless

Christopher Dawe

Services in Church

Given the current restrictions there will be no physical (9.30am) services in our Churches for the time being. We are regularly monitoring the situation and will let you know when there is any change.

Please pray with me

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star
to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us,
that we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



Please include in your prayers

- Those within our community and local area who were affected by the floods over the Christmas period.
- NHS workers and other carers as they cope with a significant increase in Covid cases.
- School children, teachers and all those who work within schools, as they prepare to go back this week.

Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome.

Contact us for login details or if you have any prayer requests.



Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 3 January

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. Through Change and Chance.
- 10.00am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship. The Second Sunday of Christmas. From Down Cathedral in Northern Ireland.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise from St Paul's Cathedral.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Canterbury Cathedral.

Wednesday 6 January

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Ely Cathedral.

Suggested Music for this week

We three Kings of Orient are

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNBbCkDMSLw>

Star Carol (Rutter)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MijVoNYmH_A

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IGP68i3JvU>

What Child is This

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jroBAI3WW8>

Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044** Available 24 hours a day.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Discovery Group

This bible study group meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings at 8pm. For further details, contact john.c.lambert@gmail.com

For the Children (& young at heart!)

This week's Bible reading (see front page) is all about the 'Three Wise Men' from the Christmas story. Do you think the wise men were excited or nervous about seeing Jesus? How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when the wise men arrived? If you were to give a gift to Jesus, what do you think it would be? Why do you think King Herod felt so frightened when he heard about the new king?

Activities

The wise men followed a star. Can you find things, at home or out and about if you go for a walk, that either look like stars or that you can make star shapes from? Be as creative as you can! You could perhaps use lollipop sticks, folded paper, cutlery, beads, pipe cleaners, clothes pegs...

The wise men were otherwise known as 'the Three Kings'. Can you make and decorate a crown to wear for Epiphany?

Songs

See him lying on a bed of straw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79h_5jhzT7Q

He walked where I walk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBrISj4bOko>

Prayer

Thank you, God, for the good things we have. It's been so exciting to have our presents, open parcels, explore what we've received. It's been so exciting to hear of the birth of Jesus, and to learn of the gifts he was given. Amen.

Bedford Foodbank



Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever. Donations of food can be placed in a box in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets.

Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. Further details can be found on their

Volunteers Urgently Needed!

Secondary schools are being asked to roll out mass Covid testing to their children. In order to do this, they need help from local volunteers! Training will be given. No medical knowledge required. Volunteers would work alongside school staff. For Kempston Challenger Academy and Daubeney Schools, contact Matthew May on 290900. Biddenham schools may also need support. Contact them direct if you are able to help.

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

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