



South Wye Team Ministry Newsletter

Sunday 17th January – Epiphany 2

Hello Everyone - I hope that you are safe and well. I know that not everyone is - some of you are currently suffering from Covid or have other health issues which are exacerbated by the current restrictions. Please be assured of our prayers and let me know if there is anything that you need.

This has been a challenging and frightening week. The feeling of dread which seems to lurk in the background through lockdown doesn't go away does it? And it doesn't always improve our tempers either. I was talking to another vicar this week and we agreed that if we know a family in our congregation who had had a whole year of health worries, financial worries, stress over children's education, job insecurity, not even able to get away for a break and worries about family members that they could not visit, we would treat that family with extra care and tenderness, be gentle with them and not expect them to always be sweetness and light. But today that is every family. Everyone we meet or encounter is a little more thin skinned than usual, a little less even tempered. So we need to be gentle with one another and be as slow as we can to respond with anger, offence or bitterness. All of which is more difficult because we too are under the same stresses. Perhaps all we can do is try to be kind.

The news from beyond the C-19 crisis is not less challenging or frightening. To watch the attack on the Capitol in Washington unfold was shocking and the images that have emerged since – of a police officer being beaten with poles which still bore the stars and stripes, of a mob chanting that a politician should be hung, of attackers carrying plastic restraints, with the clear intent of detaining people either as prisoners or hostages – have been chilling. As I reflected on the motivation of the mob terrorising elected officials and the staff who work in that building, I wondered how ordinary people could be persuaded to commit such extraordinary and awful acts. Of course it does not happen overnight. Grooming people to act against their better natures takes time and effort. Moving them to a place where they can believe that anyone who disagrees with them – or anyone different - is not simply wrong, but is bad, deserving of punishment, is not simple – but once you have achieved that point, it is simple to then persuade them to act. And awful as it is, this slippery path is one that we all might take. As we all seem to spend more and more time only talking to people who agree with us politically or in other respects, it becomes easier and easier to lose sight of the fact that the 'other' people are people too. Christians, too can find it hard to really believe that God loves the people who disagree with me as much as He loves me. God loves the people that I think are wrong.

If ordinary people can be persuaded to believe that those who are different are less than them, surely we could, with equal time and effort, persuade them of the amazing grace of God's love for us all. If rage and hate and fear can be engendered in their hearts, surely we could sow the seeds of kindness there, show them – show ourselves – another path. Could we get to the point where kindness is as contagious as any virus, where we are all super-spreaders of kindness?

This week is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme of the week this year is *Abiding in Christ*. The prayers and reflections for the week are included with this newsletter and we will be using them in our Morning and Night Prayer services. It is not so long since Christians were prepared to riot and maim and kill one another for believing the 'wrong' thing, for not agreeing about doctrine or practice, but with time and God's grace we have found ourselves able to disagree in peace and to celebrate common ground. Let's pray that political differences can, in time, be overcome in the same way and that we can all abide peacefully in Christ's love and care.

Anne

Family and Community News

Don't forget **Tuesday Morning Coffee over Zoom** – although you do have to bring your own coffee these days! Everyone is welcome! find the links on Facebook at *Cosy Cuppa and a Chat* or contact Jo for details

St Martin's Food Share

Every Monday at 10am at St Martin's Church and at 11am at the Scout Hut we have surplus food which has given to us to share with our community. As well as the spare produce from Supermarkets, we will also be sharing some of the FareShare Winter Support Package from Defra.

Everyone is welcome - Tell your neighbours and come along with a bag – and a mask! The list usually includes bread, veg, packets and tins.

Check St Martin's Facebook Page for extra slots and sites for distribution..

Thank you to our volunteers who help to make this possible

David

Services in South Wye

There will be no onsite Sunday Services in St Martin's or St Peter's until at least February. Services will be available online from 10am each Sunday on the St Martin's and St Peter's Facebook pages and on the St Martins YouTube channel.

An audio version of the service is also available by calling 01432 806066

Club Superstars Plus!

Do you know any family that would be interested in receiving a monthly package of stories, crafts and activities based on Christian festivals and celebrations. These are accompanied by videos and links on our St Martin's Facebook channel and also link to Thursday's *My Perspective* reflections.

For example in February's pack we are exploring the themes of Love and Light through the stories of St Brigid, the Presentation of Christ (Candlemas) and St Valentine. These packs are free and contain activities for all ages. Our January pack was distributed to 60 children – but we would love to see that number increase. Please email Jo on joanne.child@hereford.anglican.org or text her on 07563382923 if you would like to receive a pack or packs or know someone who would like them.

Volunteers needed

Are you resuming your Lockdown walks? Would you be able to include a covid safe doorstep delivery of our newsletters or monthly Superstars packs to addresses near you?

Please let me know if you are able to help. Many thanks

Anne

Do you have any good news or family news that you would be happy to share in this newsletter – as we are not going to see so much of each other in person in the next weeks, you could let everyone know about Birthdays, babies and big news here!

Would anyone be interested in joining a litter picking campaign. Even if it is just on your street or the path that you use for your daily exercise. If we have a few volunteers we can equip you with bags and litter pickers. Let me know if you would like to be involved.

Anne

For our Prayers

Those who are ill or in need of your prayers, including:

Gaynor C	Ann W	Carol	Lee	Roger	Dot G	Marcia R
Oliver	Chrissie	Hana	Joe D	Nick D	Brenda B	Immie B
Bob	Harry	Viv	Tom M	Helen	Barbara W	Andrea
Marie	Emma	Marcia	Beris	Daphne	Yvonne	

Those who have died and those who mourn their loss:

Lilian	Carole	Lois	John	Alan	Michael	Clive
Glenys	Christine	Pat	Pauline	Marjorie		

Anglican Communion: The Anglican Church of Australia.

Porvoo: Finland: Tampere, Bishop Matti Repo;

England: Manchester, Bishop David Walker, Bishop Mark Ashcroft, Bishop Mark Davies.

Hereford Pray for the Intergenerational Ministers working throughout our Diocese, and for in our parishes all who plan and lead family worship, cafe-style church, Messy Church, Open the Book, and all our worship and activities that reach out to children and families, and to schools, playgroups etc. Nick Read, collated and installed this week as a Prebendary.

The Wider View While Covid continues to prevent visitors going to our link schools, hospitals, dioceses and parishes across Tanzania, pray for the relationships we have to remain robust and grow stronger, so that we can overcome the lack of personal contact that we know is so important.

South Wye Pray for those administering and managing the C-19 vaccination programme locally

This Week The third Sunday in January is kept as *World Religion Day*, and we are reminded both of the importance of religion within our world, something we can be forgetful of in what is in many ways a post-religious Western society; and of our need to seek understanding, dialogue and harmony between faiths, while confidently proclaiming Christ.

Monday also begins the *Big Energy Saving Week*. Both as individuals and as churches we may well be paying more than we need to for the energy we use, and we may also be able to reduce our usage - and many people in our parish communities are probably paying more than they should be at a time when they are struggling to get by.

Monday also begins the annual *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*. This year's theme of "Abiding in Christ" uses material prepared by the sisters of the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland. Pray for those of other Christian denominations with whom we share a call to work and worship within our communities, and pray for good and fruitful ecumenical links.

Monday is also Martin Luther King Day, and we are reminded that race continues to be a divisive issue in much of our world. Pray there may come a time when race is no longer a cause of hatred or prejudice, and give thanks for those who speak out against injustice and bias.

Wulfstan was the saintly bishop of our neighbouring Diocese of Worcester who ably guided that diocese through the transition from Saxon to Norman rule. Pray for the churches and people of the Diocese of Worcester today.

Saturday is kept as *National Reading Day*. Give thanks for all that encourages a love of books and reading in children and young people, and pray for all who work to encourage literacy. Pray too for our library services, often under threat because of the need to trim budgets; pray for those who campaign against cuts, and community groups keeping local libraries open.

Services online and on TV and Radio

South Wye Services

Through the Week: 8am and 8pm daily Morning and Night Prayer on St Martin's Facebook, this week we will be using prayers from the booklet for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Midweek Reflection:

St Martin's Facebook Page 10am Thursday 21st,

Sunday 17th January;

A recorded All Age service of Communion will be available from 10am on St Martin's Facebook page, St. Peter's Facebook and St. Martin's YouTube channel.

Telephone service: To listen to an audio version of the Communion service, call 01432 806066 after noon on Sunday – the service will be available for the whole week. This will cost you the same per minute as a local 'phone call. There is a message and then some silence before the service starts – don't panic, if you have heard the message then the service will start before long.

Diocese of Hereford

Diocese of Hereford Facebook:

Sunday Service 10am.

Diocese Freephone Prayerline:

Dial 0800 304 7052 to hear a prayer.

Church of England

National Weekly Service Facebook at 9:00am.

TV and Radio on Sunday 10th January;

BBC H&W 8am Sunday Worship.

Radio 4 8:10am Sunday Worship "I will sing with the Spirit" from All Saints Leighton

Buzzard with Alexander BBC Radio 2 Young Chorister of the Year

BBC 1 1:15pm Faith in Action – new presenter Brenda Edwards sees how faith is put into action in East London

Prayer for the day:

The Church of England website has audio and text of the Prayer for the Day.

Bible study

You might find this study helpful – either to use on your own or with your household.

The Gospel reading for Sunday 17th is John 1.43-51

An opening prayer

Almighty God, you speak to us in so many ways.

Help us, in our worship today, to hear your voice and know it is you.

Speak to us in the silence, through Scripture and by the Spirit.

Speak through others and through your creation, through images, experiences, music and encounters.

Speak in ways that we can understand. So, speak, Lord – and help us to listen. Amen.

John 1:43-51 New Revised Standard Version

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 toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get 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."

Explore and respond to the text

- *Do you have a different Bible translation? How does the text differ from this one?*
- *Read the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

Bible notes

John introduces his hearers to Jesus' mission a day at a time. On the previous day, Andrew and another disciple found Jesus, along with Simon Peter. Now, Jesus takes the initiative and finds Philip. There is a pattern of 'finding' as the group of disciples takes shape; some find each other, others are found by Jesus. The disciples also express their new relationship by saying: 'We have found the Messiah' (1.41). Finding implies a profound recognition of their ability to connect deeply with Jesus' mission.

However, when Philip finds Nathanael, there is a hitch in the process. Nathanael does not accept the invitation but challenges Philip to prove that anything good, let alone the Messiah, can come from somewhere so downmarket as Nazareth! Philip's reply recalls Jesus' invitation to the two disciples the previous day – 'Come and see' (1.39). The Greek word 'see' implies far more than 'take a look'. To see is to understand.

For Nathanael, though, it is not seeing but hearing that overcomes his reluctance. In conversation with Jesus, he discovers that Jesus knows far more about him than he expected. Jesus acknowledges him as 'truly an Israelite', living in God's 'shalom' where each one has their own vine and fig tree (Micah 4.4). The change is remarkable as Nathanael heaps Jesus with honorific titles: Israel's king, God's son (Psalm 2.7). Perhaps there is a wry smile on Jesus' lips as Nathanael reacts with such enthusiasm, but

then he promises far more: heaven opened, the barrier between God and humanity swept away, and angels coming and going as they did for Jacob (Genesis 28.12). Finally, Jesus tells Nathanael how he understands himself – he is the son of man. Does this mean that he is God’s chosen one (see Daniel 7.13), or is he using it in the Aramaic sense of ‘an ordinary person’? It’s hard to tell – maybe John has both meanings in mind – but it’s an important moment as Jesus names himself for the first time.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

The reasons may be justified, or it may be pure prejudice (or something in between), but it is common enough for people to regard certain places as ‘the pits’. This is Nathanael’s perception of Nazareth, but he is quickly proved wrong. Unexpected as it may seem to him, it is the home of the Messiah. It’s easy to allow ourselves to be blinded by stereotypes of places or people, and to miss the wonder and the beauty waiting to be discovered. How can your faith community look more carefully at its surroundings, especially the places that, for whatever reasons, you don’t usually frequent? Will you go and see what good is to be found there?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.

- *What circumstances or environment help you to see or hear God?*
- *How might we help each other to look and listen for God?*



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