

PARTNERS

weekly newsletter



7th January 2024 - Epiphany

We wish you ...

... a happy New Year! Only a few days ago we were wishing everyone a happy Christmas, and so soon we are into 2024! It is good to wish family and friends all God's best for the New Year.

I remember a greeting to a newly-married couple: "We wish you the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, and the children of Israel!" It's wisdom that we all need, and our world needs, for the months ahead. Following the visit of the shepherds and the move from the stable to a house, Mary, Joseph and Jesus received the visit of the wise men from the east.

Unlike the shepherds who followed the sign given them by the angels, and found the babe "wrapped in swaddling cloths", these men followed the star which led to the new-born King. Did they deviate from following the star to end up at the court of King Herod, resulting in his wrath and murder of the babes of Bethlehem? We shall never know. But they returned to focus on and follow the star the few miles to Bethlehem (Matt.2:9) and worshipped Jesus, presenting Him with their costly gifts – and presumably providing Joseph with the necessary finance for the flight to, and stay, in Egypt.

May we pray for the Lord's wisdom for the year ahead – for leaders of nations, for the war-torn areas of the world, for elections of future leaders ... and for Luke and Sarah as they join us next month to lead ministry here.

Back to Solomon, and the Lord's promise to him: "I will give you a wise and discerning heart". (1 Kings 3:12).

I pray that He will give us this as we seek to follow the Lord and His leading this year.

St Mary's
Fordingbridge
SP6 1BB

St Mary's
Breamore
SP6 2DF

Holy Ascension
Hyde
SP6 2QJ

St Giles
Godshill
SP6 2JJ

St Boniface
Woodgreen
SP6 2AJ

St Mary's
Hale
SP6 2RF

Sandleheath
Uniting Church
SP6 1PT

Canon Michael Anderson

We welcome all, especially visitors and those attending for the first time. If you need gluten free wafers at Communion, please speak to someone at the door before the service.

Please take this newsletter home with you for the week ahead. God Bless!

Readings for this Week: 7th January 2024

Epiphany

COLLECT:

Creator of the heavens,
you 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.

PSALM 72:10-15

10. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay tribute,
and the kings of Arabia and Saba offer gifts.
11. All kings shall bow down before him,
and all the nations do him service.
12. For he shall deliver the poor who cries out in distress,
and the oppressed who has no helper.
13. He shall have pity on the lowly and poor;
he shall preserve the lives of the needy.
14. He shall redeem their lives from oppression and violence,
and dear shall their blood be in his sight.
15. Long may he live,
and may there be given to him gold from Arabia,
may prayer be made for him always,
and may they bless him all the day long.

A Reading from the Letter to the Ephesians

Ephesians 3:1-12

Paul, writing to Gentiles in Ephesus, assures them that they also share in the riches of Christ.

¹ I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles - ² for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, ³ and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴ a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵ In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶ that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷ Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰ so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

At the end, the Reader says:

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

THE GOSPEL READING

Please stand and turn to face the Gospel Reader

When the Gospel is announced, the Reader says:

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to *Matthew*

Glory to you, O Lord.

(Glory be to thee, O Lord.)

Matthew echoes the words of Isaiah as he describes the visit of the Gentile Wise Men to Jesus.

¹ In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ² ‘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.’ ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They 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 rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.”’ ⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ Then 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.’ ⁹ When 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. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On 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. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

c) *New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible*

At the end, the Reader says:
This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

(At the end, the Reader says:
This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise be to thee, O Christ.)

POST COMMUNION PRAYER:

Lord God,
the bright splendour whom the nations seek:
may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light
discern the glory of your presence in your Son,
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

Ever wondered **WHY?** Or been asked a difficult question from someone that starts 'Why...?' Well maybe you would like to come to the **6 O'clock service**. We are starting a new series in January to explore some questions that are fundamental to the Christian faith and the January question is... '**Why was Jesus born?**' So maybe you know someone who has asked you about Jesus recently or maybe you have asked yourself 'why did Jesus have to come to earth?' If so, please do come on the **7th January at 6 o'clock**. For those of you who don't know about this service, it is an informal service that happens once a month at St Mary's in Fordingbridge (1st Sunday of every month) and is primarily aimed at people who wish to explore faith. But we would love to see more of our regular church goers to help us to support those who are exploring. We also serve tea and coffee at the beginning and a hot meal at the end for those who fancy eating with us. So it's a lovely way to end the weekend! Any questions, please do contact Alex Sains 07816225030

Sacrifice and Remembrance - the emotive story behind how the fallen in two World Wars and more recent conflicts are commemorated began in November 1918, immediately after the end of WWI. Jeremy Prescott will talk about the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) when he joins Fordingbridge History Society (FHS) on **Monday 8 January at 2.30pm** in St Mary's Church Hall. There are many war graves in and near Fordingbridge, including 12 in the cemetery at Stuckton and a significant number in Ringwood. Do come along and join us: you'll be sure of a warm welcome and a fact-filled afternoon! Contact Helen Coote (01425 654995) or check out the FHS website (fordingbridgehistorysociety.org.uk) for further details.

Hyde Messy Church starts a new term on **January 8th at 3.30pm** in Hyde Church Centre. Primary age children and their siblings with parent or carer every welcome. We will have a fun time with Worship, Crafts and a meal on the theme of New Beginnings.

Hyde Mothers' Union first meeting of the year is on **Tuesday 9th January at 2.30pm** in Hyde Church Centre. A mini AGM followed by New year's Quiz and New Years' tea.

TOFSS (Too Old For Sunday School) usually meet monthly at 15 Provost Street at 10.30am on a Thursday. We will meet in the New Year on **11 January and 8 February**. We will be watching a DVD ("The Chosen") portraying parts of the New Testament in an authentic and inspiring way. Come and join us! All welcome. More information from Pat Bloomfield 01425 837735.

Please note the church office will be **shut** on Friday **12th January**

Hale Epiphany Concert: The Morning Star to the Star of Bethlehem
You are all invited to enjoy music From Advent to Epiphany on **Sunday, 21st January at 4pm**. Canon Gary Philbrick is returning with his choir, together with Hales Angel's to entertain us post - Christmas. Tickets are £12 each, available from the church

office, Woodgreen community shop and Christine Wilson or can be preordered by calling Lynda Warne on 07799542707. Available to buy on the door. Money raised to support Hale roof fund and the Trussel Trust foodbank

Open Doors Magazines and Prayer Leaflets for Jan/Feb are Here! For over 65 years, Open Doors has stood alongside the Persecuted Church, strengthening and supporting Christians who follow Jesus, no matter the cost. Here is your chance to see what they get up to. Please pick up your copy today.

Open Gardens 2024 – Fordingbridge/Godshill/Sandleheath

We now have a small list of gardens that will be open over the late May Bank Holiday to help us raise funds, but we need a few more. Your garden doesn't have to be either large or spectacular, we aren't trying to do Chelsea! It would be great if you could also host your guests with refreshments (or perhaps have a few plants to sell) but if you don't bake we can find you a partner. Or do you have a non-churchgoing friend with a garden they would be prepared to open? We need to begin to plan after Christmas so please let me know if you are willing to help. Mark Ward: mark@fordingbridge.com or 01425 656120

Fundraising for St Mary's Hale roof repairs. We have been donated some beautifully knitted childrens cardigans. Many with knitted in rabbits etc on the front. Pastel colours, age 2 - 4 approx. To buy, (they are £5 and at the back of St Boniface) please put your money in an envelope marked Cardigan and post it in the wall safe on the left of the toilet door.

Welcome Hamper - We are putting a non-perishable food and drink hamper together for the arrival of our new vicar, Luke and his wife. If you would like to contribute please place something in the receptacle in your church during January. It could be a store cupboard item or a little bit of luxury! Thanks Mark Ward

News about Rev Tom Burden - Tom Burden, our former Curate, is returning to England in March to take up a parish role as Vicar of Ventnor and Bonchurch on the Isle of Wight. Tom grew up in Ventnor and his responsibilities will include the church in which he was converted as a sixth former nearly 35 years ago. Tom left us to lead the Anglican School in Jerusalem during the absence of his predecessor, recent Ringwood Curate Sandra Matthews, who is able to return earlier than expected, thus giving Tom the opportunity to accept what he sees as the best job in the Church of England. The formal announcement from the Diocese of Portsmouth is at Diocese of Portsmouth - News - Ventnor man to return as vicar (anglican.org) and you will see that he will be licensed by Bishop Jonathan Frost, Bishop of Portsmouth (formerly Bishop of Southampton) in St. Catherine's Church Ventnor IOW on March 13th 2024.

St Mary's Fordingbridge – Parking: Please do not park your car in front of the Lych Gate. Parking is available behind the church hall and to the south-east side of the church. Thank you.

Christmas Wreaths/ Table Decorations. A very big thank you for all your support from the Wreath Team as we are very pleased to have raised £528 for Church funds.

ITEMS FOR PARTNERS need to be sent to the Church Office (e-mail address below) by 5.00p.m. on **Wednesdays**. Please put 'Partners' in the e-mail subject line. Thank you, Zoe

Reflection

Our Diocese produces a daily cycle of prayer through which we pray for each Diocese in the Anglican Communion and for each Deanery and Parish in our own Diocese. Bishop Philip introduces that covering January to March 2024 by talking about Epiphany and how Matthew (the most Jewish of the Gospels) tells us about the non-Jews, the Magi or Kings who visited Jesus at the beginning of His life. He sees this as an example of how the most unexpected of people are welcomed by Jesus.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany this weekend, the following poem by Malcolm Guite seems to reflect in part Bishop Philip's thought.

The Magi

It might have been just someone else's story;
Some chosen people get a special king,
We leave them to their own peculiar glory,
We don't belong, it doesn't mean a thing.
But when these three arrive they bring us with them,
Gentiles like us, their wisdom might be ours;
A steady step that finds an inner rhythm,
A pilgrim's eye that sees beyond the stars.
They did not know his name but still they sought him
They came from elsewhere but still they found;
In palaces they found those who sold and bought him,
But in the filthy stable, hallowed ground.
Their courage gives our questing hearts a voice
To seek, to find, to worship, to rejoice.

If you want to see another example of this in the context of who is welcomed by Jesus, take a look at the words of Stuart Townend's hymn/song 'Vagabonds'

Julian Sims

CHURCH OFFICE IS OPEN TO VISITORS between 10.00 am and 12.00
Contact via Email : Office@AvonValleyChurches.org.uk or call 01425 653163 between 10.00 am and 12.00 or
leave a message Website : www.AvonValleyChurches.org.uk

Epiphany

7th January 2024

Online services available via Facebook or Website
at 'Avon Valley Churches'

Sunday	8.15 am	Fordingbridge	Holy Communion
7th Jan	10.00 am	Breamore	Morning Prayer
	10.00 am	Fordingbridge	Sung Eucharist
	10.00 am	Hale	Holy Communion
	10.00 am	Hyde	Holy Communion
	10.45 am	Sandleheath	Morning Service
	6.00 pm	Fordingbridge	Six O'Clock Service
Monday	10.00 am	Online	Morning prayer (<i>Meeting ID: 846 5168 7529, Password: 764200</i>)
Wednesday			
Friday			
Wed 10 th	10.00 am	Frogham Chapel	Prayer Gathering
Thurs 11 th	11.00 am	Fordingbridge	The funeral of the late Norman Timmins
Sunday	8.15 am	Hyde	Holy Communion (BCP)
14th Jan	10.00 am	Breamore	Holy Communion (BCP)
	10.00 am	Fordingbridge	Allsorts Service
	10.00 am	Woodgreen	Morning Service
	10.00 am	Hyde	All-age Service
	10.45 am	Sandleheath	Moring Service
	6.00 pm	Fordingbridge	Evensong