

Sunday 10th January 2021—Baptism of Christ



COLLECT FOR BAPTISM OF CHRIST

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.

WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Sunday 10th January

10:30am Worship via Zoom
 Meeting ID: 854 4574 3292
 Passcode: HR&W

SUNDAY READINGS

<i>Morning</i>	<i>Evening</i>
Genesis 1.1-5	Psalms 46, 47
Psalms 29	Isaiah 42.1-9
Acts 19.1-7	Ephesians 2.1-10
Mark 1.4-11	Matthew 3.13-17

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Isaiah 61: 1-3

I don't know whether to say 'Happy New Year' or just 'well it's a new year'.

We start 2021 with mixed emotions – the frustration of another lockdown with all the incumbent restrictions but with the promise of a vaccination programme being rolled out.

As Christ's church we find ourselves sharing in the suffering of families up and down the country, not being able to meet up, having to rely on Zoom and phone calls. But we hold on to the promise of Jesus that *'surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'* (Matt 28:20). And, though we may find it difficult to express or sense at times, I hope that we can share Paul's conviction that *'neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord'* (Romans 8:38-39).

2020 was a difficult year! With trying to keep up with guidance and advice from Government and Bishops, having to learn to Zoom for worship and meetings, walking with wedding couples who had their plans thrown awry, suffering with the bereaved in the limitations put on funerals, it has been hard to find old and new ways of sustaining our spiritual walk with God. But, to paraphrase a song which we sing in our schools, *'Our God is a great big God and He has held us in His hands'*.

And so we look forward into 2021.

The passage from Isaiah is the one which Jesus read in the synagogue, declaring, *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"* (Luke 4:21). Jesus was saying that He came to:

- preach good news to the poor
- bind up the broken-hearted
- proclaim freedom for the captives
- release the prisoners from darkness
- comfort all who mourn
- provide for those who grieve



As the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us. As individuals, as churches, as a Benefice, we are challenged to follow in Christ's footsteps and fulfil this vision in our generation. This text will be our core text for 2021 to guide our thinking, challenge our doing and encourage our believing.

There are a number of priorities I see for this year, as restrictions allow:

- A safe return to our buildings for gathered worship.
- Re-starting Feast on Friday at Ringsfield Village Hall to serve parents and children from Ringsfield Primary School, as well as local residents for whom Sunday worship is not an option.
- Establishing and building a new worshipping community serving Brampton and Stoven, based at Brampton Village Hall.
- Strengthening our links and involvement with our communities; to bring us as church to the heart of our communities.
- Where practicable, to re-imagine and develop our buildings for use beyond Sunday worship.
- Using our experience of Zoom meetings, to look at running Benefice-wide 'Introduction to Christianity' and 'Growing in Faith' courses.
- Building on what we were able to do for carol services, to be innovative and imaginative in taking our worship to where people are; being obedient to Christ's great commission to 'Go'.

I firmly believe that God is challenging us to step out of our comfort zones and to trust Him wherever He leads us. As we take His hand and step out into the darkness I believe that God will bless us and make us a blessing to all who we meet.

God has been with us, and will continue to be with us. In response we offer ourselves; our lives, our skills, our talents, our time, and, yes, our money.

I want to thank you all for your faithful offerings to God's mission in our Benefice. 2020 was not easy, for us or for the Diocese. The Diocese have taken every measure they can to keep their costs to a minimum whilst offering us high quality service and advice. And I know that Bishops Martin and Mike are very aware of the effect the pandemic has had on parish finances and are extremely grateful and deeply touched by the way in which parishes and Benefices have sought to pay their share.

For 2021, I would like to invite you to consider using the Parish Giving Scheme to make your regular offering to God's work. You can get details from your parish treasurer or from me. I know that times are hard and finances are tight but I would like to ask you to prayerfully consider your financial offering. And thank you, whatever the outcome of that consideration is.

*I do not know what lies ahead, the way I cannot see
but one stands near to be my guide, He'll show the way to me.*

*So as I face tomorrow with it's problems large and small,
I'll trust the God of miracles;
give to Him my all.*

God bless,

Rev Phil

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS:

- God's vision for us as a Benefice
- Our communities and the support we can offer
- Our schools: our children and their teachers
- The roll out of the vaccine
- Those recently bereaved: Carol Bromley, Pat Fearn, Jan Hulme, the families of Sheila Scarle, Ann Batchelor, Malcolm Rogers, Megan Mack, Jeanne Robins, Dorothy Sampson
- Tess Blower, Jonathan Roots, Gloria Kidner, Ann Boulton, Christine Knights

CLERGY CONTACTS

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