

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Epiphany & Rev Jutta's last service - 3rd January 2021

Collect:

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.

Psalm 72.1-7,10-15

- 1 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.
- 2 May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.
- 3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.
- 4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.
- 5 May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- 6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- 10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring

A reading from the prophet Isaiah (60.1-6)

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew (2.1-12)

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "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." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: '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.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 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."



gifts.

- 11 May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.
- 12 For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.
- 13 He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.
- 14 From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.
- 15 Long may he live! May gold of Sheba be given to him. May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all day long.

nurses' arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

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. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. **This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

Reflection:

'They left for their own country by another road.'

The Christmas stories are so familiar to us that it's easy to overlook that most of the events pan out very differently to how the main characters would have envisaged them. Take Mary and Joseph: who wants to go away from home two weeks before their first baby is due to be born? And then, end up giving birth in an unsavoury stable, with unfamiliar people attending? The same for the wise men: after a long journey to Jerusalem, they have to go on even further, this small town of Bethlehem, to find the newborn king in a humble house with 'ordinary' people like Mary and Joseph. And then, when it's time to go home, they face more unfamiliar territory in order to avoid seeing king Herod again. Life is often hard, full of unexpected challenges, as we have seen in 2020.

I wonder what kind of conversation the wise men would have had, as they were leaving Bethlehem. One saying: "I am so glad we persevered! There were moments when I was wondering if we would ever find this new king, who is so full of promise for the world! I am so very glad we kept on searching!"

Don't we find, in our lives, that it's easy to give up, when the going gets tough, we are faced with obstacles, we get tired? What helps us to persevere, to pursue an aim that's important; to keep on hoping, looking for signs of encouragement, offers of help?

Perhaps, another of the wise men comments: "Aren't we glad we had that star to guide us? What a blessing! What a gift! It helped us to know there is something important in life for us to seek, it helped to orientate ourselves, it shone in the dark nights. It gave us courage and showed us the way."

What is the guiding star in our lives? What is our purpose? And when things are hard, not working out the way we would like them to, where do we find guidance? What and who helps us to find a way again, to find new hope to move forward with courage?

Continuing with their conversation, the third wise man observed: "And what a huge surprise to find this new king as a baby in a humble house in Bethlehem, having been born in a stable? I thought when we reached Jerusalem, with it's palaces, we would find him there."

Where are we looking for our peace and salvation? Many people think that they will find it becoming rich, having status, security, a perfect body with perfect

health. But that's not how it works out. We know it, and the birth of Jesus shows us another way. God coming to share our human lives in a baby, born into a poor family, in an occupied country, who then have to flee to Egypt because their lives are in danger, encourages us to seek peace and happiness in the circumstances and challenges of our daily lives. And the good news is that everyone matters, especially those for whom life is hard, those who live with illness, disability, poverty; those who know they need others, need God, and are able to receive and share.

The star of Bethlehem, which brought the wise men to the Christ-child, God's gift to the whole world and all people, is a symbol of light, yes, but especially a symbol of hope and courage. I love the feast of the Epiphany as much as Christmas, because at the beginning of a New Year, with all it's uncertainty and a high probability of things not quite working out the way we would like them too, we have the assurance of the guiding star, God with us, God showing us the way on the unfamiliar road that lies ahead, as it did for the wise men.

A year ago, I did not expect that this Epiphany Sunday would be my last Sunday with you as priest-in-charge. I did not expect all of us to face such an unfamiliar road: a world threatened and changed by COVID; St Thomas with an interregnum; me taking on this role in Ditchingham with enormous challenges, personally as I will be living in two places, and as a project needing the resources to make it work!

Today, here at St Thomas, we may all identify with the wise men setting off *on another road* to get to their own country! Our only option is to trust in God and keep our eyes on the guiding star. And just like the wise men, we, too, may want to look back on our journey together and talk about all that we have learned and that gives us hope.

I look back on five years with you, and I overflow with gratitude for our journey, our lives together; the way God was at work in our midst, often in unexpected and surprising ways, always providing and blessing. There are outward symbols, like our car park, the altar frontal, the community room, the peace garden. There is all worship, our social gatherings and the programmes we have offered like Alpha and Children's workshops. But above all it's the people—each one of us at St Thomas who has given of themselves,

their time, their skills, their love, their commitment, their money, their forgiveness and friendship. I have been richly blessed by you all. I hope our parish and the people we serve have been blessed and that all of you feel blessed, too. As we move into 2021, may our Christmas Star be a symbol of hope and courage for us, a reminder that God is with us, that God shows us the way, that God provides, that God wants to bless us richly. Like the wise men, we continue our journey full of thanksgiving and faith. Amen. *Canon Jutta*

Our Saviour Christ is the Prince of Peace..

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

Lord, for the years
your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us,
pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word,
the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:
for young and old,
for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world
when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:
Lord of the world,
we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves;
in living power remake us -
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us:
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

A prayer for Epiphany

Come freshly to us now, Lord God,
And as we offer you our lives, renew in us your
gifts:

The gold of our potential.
The incense of our prayers and aspirations,
The myrrh of healing for our pain;
Feed us and nourish us
that we may grow in the life of Christ;
Fill us with your Spirit
that we may overflow with your love,
and transform the world with your glory.
Amen.

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian, Jean Dominy

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie, Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Lee Grigs, Stacey Pratt

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives & livelihoods, the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refuges across the world & diplomates and peace makers, working to end conflicts

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: Pearl Leggett, John Chapman, Barry Stammers

Call this number —> for free.



Notices:

Happy New Year and God's blessing on you and your loved ones

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way." So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.


Church opening (11.30 - 1.30pm Mon & Thurs) will restart on Monday 4th Jan.

Alpha: Starting Thursday 7th Jan 7pm on Zoom! **Please email Rev Cat to sign up. Bring a friend!** You are welcome to come to the first session just to try it out!

17th Jan: Bishop Martin is coming to do a Baptism & Confirmation service! We will be baptising baby Dylan, baptising and confirming Patrick, and welcoming two teenagers from St Matthew's to also be confirmed. Please pray for the candidates: Dylan, Patrick, Freja, and Roger.

Prayer! We want our church to grow, so please join in this prayer at home: *"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community."*

To book by phone for Sunday services, call **01473 742973** in the week before the service, leaving your name, how many you are booking for, and your phone number.

 **St Thomas Pilgrim Community** are continuing after Canon Jutta has left. They are holding their Second Commitment Service with Bishop Mike on 10th January at 4pm –either in Church or on ZOOM (tbd). Please, keep them in your prayers. For more information, see Jutta or Malcolm.

This Week:

Sunday, 3rd January: Epiphany & Jutta's last Sunday at St Thomas

10am Eucharist: in-person worship with Zoom and livestream

Monday 4th January

7.30pm St Thomas Pilgrim Community meeting

Tuesday 5th January

No Meditation Group livestream on **Facebook/StThomasPilgrimCommunity**

Wednesday 6th January

10am Eucharist with livestream

(10.30am Canon Jutta's Licensing as Dean of WITH Community by the Bishop of Norwich at All Hallows Chapel, Ditchingham)

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Edith Abbott; Gareth & Theresa Andrews; Eric Baker; June Baker & family; Jenny & Andrew Barfield; Alan Banks; Michelle & Stephen Bennett; Gerald & Jenny Biggs



No Birthdays this week

Contacts:

Priest in charge: Canon Jutta Brueck m:07958 360564

Email: jutta.brueck@cofesuffolk.org

Jutta's days off are: Fridays & Saturdays

Assistant Curate: Revd Cat Connolly m: 07530 412988

Email: revcatconnolly@gmail.com

Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs m:07906 665530

Director of Music: Simon Clark BA (Hons) FLCM ARCO

m: 07961 859344 Email: sussexsi@aol.com

Church wardens: Roger Elmer m:07810 274586

Stephen Marginson 01473 258791

If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

Mary Bullass 625135

Gloria Elmer 745590

Rev Jackie 07962 172639

Revd Pat 464748

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>