

Dear friends,

Christmas is now behind us and we enter the season of Epiphany that seeks to expand our understanding of what it all means! The Western church uses the story of the visit of the Magi to introduce the season which symbolically tells us that Christ is the king of kings (Gold) and that he is a priest that sits at the right hand of God interceding for humanity (Frankincense) and that his death would have great significance (Myrrh). On Sunday we celebrated the Baptism of Christ which incidentally is the main Epiphany story of the Eastern church. All three persons of the Trinity are involved, and the mystical familial unity of Jesus with his Father bound together in the Spirit is affirmed in the words from God “You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased”

Sunday 14th January – 2nd of Epiphany

I will preside at the services at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11.00 respectively. Chris Cant will preside at the 8am at St. Peter's and Canon Ken Parry will preside at his first 10am service at St. Peter's for the first time since he was Vicar here many years ago – Welcome home Ken! I will then preside at the first evensong of the new year at 6pm.

1 Samuel 3: 1-10 (11-20). The call of Samuel as a great prophet who eventually anoints David as king after many twists and turns in the story happens at the Temple in Shiloh where Eli is the priest. Eli's failing eyesight is probably indicative of his losing favour in God's sight because of his inability to control his sons. Visions or messages from God were not common in those times and Samuel in Hebrew means “God has heard”.

Revelation 5: 1-10. Complex and mysterious imagery is employed by the author of revelation to say that the vision of the future held in the hand of God is unable to be opened except by one who is a “slaughtered lamb”. The vision of the future is one of violence and calamities but the lamb shares in that horror and so is able to redeem that future. The bowl of incense represents the prayers of the saints so that the church on earth is joined to heaven.

John 1: 43-51. The call of the disciples in John is slightly different to other accounts because instead of a direct personal call, the disciples reacted to something unique and extraordinary that they saw in Jesus. Nathanael doesn't appear in any list of the apostles but appears again after the resurrection in a group of disciples by the sea of Galilee. He is told by Jesus that Jesus' intimate connection to spiritual realities will astound him much more in the future.

Ecumenical service for the week of prayer for Christian unity

I have contacted the Methodist and Baptist churches and will extend an invitation also to the Roman Catholic church to take part in a service on **21st January at 6pm** which falls in the middle of the said week (18th – 25th). The service has been put together this year by Christians in Burkina Faso and backed by the Vatican and the World council of churches.

Thought for Today

“Mr. Bates versus the Post Office” has had a dramatic impact on the British psyche, prompting calls for the former head of the Post Office to be stripped of her CBE, questions asked in the house of commons, and causing righteous outrage amongst millions of people. So, we decided to watch it and I can see why it has had the effect

that it has. Ordinary, decent people being accused of stealing, some driven to bankruptcy, imprisonment, and suicide – all completely innocent - and the post Office who lied and fought and dragged its feet for decades to stymie any attempts to achieve justice is an ongoing embarrassment to Britain and its legal system. Watching the programme brought tears to my eyes and I could almost feel my blood boil. Where does this sense of Justice and injustice come from? It seems to be deeply, and I would say, divinely ingrained. This might be too crude but if the New Testament could be characterised as being primarily about Love, then certainly the Old Testament could be characterised as primarily about Justice. The human need to see justice done goes to the core of our being. Our understanding and perception of what is just about certain situations is affected by our knowledge or ignorance of the full facts, social standing, vested interests and interpretation of history and political position but here there seems to be a cut and dried case of mind-boggling injustice that unites both left and right. To punish those who have perpetrated these injustices, who have wronged their fellow man also runs very deep but is tempered by the Christian revelation that God deals with us primarily through mercy rather than justice, a concept well understood by the former chief executive of the Post Office because she is also an Anglican priest. On the scales of justice no-one deserves “to go to heaven” because we are all sinners as we affirm every week. We have to somehow balance our deep sense of justice together with the Love and mercy revealed in the Christian religion. Luckily for us, God is merciful and deals with us entirely mercifully, which is called Grace.

The Prayer for Today is for New Year and was written by Brother John Charles Vockler.

**For all the possibilities ahead in this new year make us thankful O Lord,
Give us wisdom, courage and discernment in the face of so much chaos, despair
and fear.
Help us to see how, in our circumstances, we can contribute towards peace,
faith and love.
And give us the will to translate our desires into actions.**

Love and peace,
Martin