Happy New Year!

Let us hope that 2021 brings better things, including successful control of the plague.

Let's hope also that we can learn from the positive aspects of the pandemic, that we can continue to build on our sense of community and live more thoughtfully.

Many thanks to Judith for today's service, in which we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany.

We three kings (and camels) with lyrics and somewhat over-exaggerated oh…

https://youtu.be/j1ZOGTPsxng

Gerald Finley singing the Peter Cornelius Three Kings, with Ivor Atkins' choral arrangement of the chorale, familiar to many choirs

https://youtu.be/gKzs9jySpeo

Another hymn to stretch your vocal cords; Brightest and Best, sung by the choir of St Luke's Chelsea

https://youtu.be/Zmtb3DJMa3Y

There are several renaissance settings of the Latin text Ab Oriente (from the East). Here is one by Sweelinck, sung by the choir of Clare College under Timothy Brown

https://youtu.be/UW5PhDPvus0

We'll continue the Epiphany theme next week.

With all good wishes for 2021.
Chris

The Second Sunday of Christmas, January 3rd
Celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany

Lord Jesus Christ, wisdom of God, we praise you; word everlasting, we bless you; light undying, we glorify you; fount of mercy, we adore you; joy of the saints, we worship you; world without end. Amen.
(Clement of Alexandria c.150-c.215)

CONFESSION The wise men followed the star to find Jesus the King. Forgive our reluctance to seek you – forgive and heal us:
May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself, and cleanse us from all our sins that we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Common Worship)

COLLECT O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; 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. Amen.

READINGS Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm72:1-15; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

REFLECTION We are accustomed to seeing three miniscule kings wend their way onto the primary school's makeshift stage, trailing dressing gowns, turbans poised precariously. Their hands clutch tinselled gifts; behind them lurch – camels? The account in Matthew's gospel is of a very different arrival, this one fraught with uncertainty, fear and danger. It is a dramatic story - led by a brilliant star, scholars are determined to find the one who is 'born king of the Jews', terrifying the present king of the Jews, only on his throne by courtesy of the Roman overlords. We know the tale well. The Jews, too, knew what was to come; prophecies such as the beautiful passage from Isaiah were their promise. But the promise wasn't solely for the Jews. The epiphany, the revelation, is understood by Gentiles, coming to find the promised king. As Paul says, 'The Gentiles have become fellow-heirs.' Their symbolic gifts are not entirely joyful; T.S.Eliot, in The Journey of the Magi, has them ask, 'Were we led all that way for Birth or Death?' All that the Wise Men know is that this manifestation is something so wonderful that they must endure the discomfort and danger, to come and worship the child who has been born, and that their gifts must reflect his kingship.

PRAYERS

Lord Jesus, may your light shine upon our way, as once it guided the steps of the magi: that we too may be led into your presence and worship you, the Child of Mary, the Word of the Father, the King of nations, the Saviour of mankind; to whom be glory for ever.
(Frank Colquhoun)

We pray for the countries of the world where people suffer, whether from natural disaster or political unrest.

We continue to pray for the sick and suffering, especially those dear to us, and we ask your blessing on all who are affected by the coronavirus pandemic. We thank you for the dedication of all who are engaged in healing the sick or preventing disease. We name before you those who are in our own minds at this time……

We thank you, Lord, that we, too, have heard the good news, and may also come and worship.

WE SAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

WE SHARE THE GRACE

FINAL PRAYER Lord, teach me to seek you, and reveal yourself to me as I look for you; for I cannot seek you unless first you teach me, nor find you unless first you reveal yourself to me. *(St Ambrose, 340-397)*

