



Weekly Update

Epiphany 1– Baptism of Christ - Sunday 10th January 2021

From the clergy...

Dear all

I am sure many of us will be thinking, 'Oh no, here we are again,' now we are in a national lockdown. However, we are not back where we were last March. Firstly, we are more than halfway through this difficult journey, and closer to emerging out the other side.

Secondly, we have more knowledge and better

medicines to treat those who are ill. This time, we know vaccines are being rolled out.

There is no getting away from the difficult few months ahead, as the Prime Minister has said.

The new strain has put enormous pressure on the NHS. Broadstone itself is now an area of concern – we are one of the highest hotspots in the BCP area. The figures ending December 31st, according to the gov.uk website, showed 68 cases in Broadstone, which gives us a rate of 668.6 per 100,000, which is well above the national average.

For these reasons, we have had no choice but to close our doors to physical gatherings of worship and private prayer at this time. We must all stay home and stay safe – for our own sake, and to avoid putting additional pressure on the NHS or risking the lives of others.

With one in three people who have Covid showing no symptoms, we must all assume we might have it, and ensure we keep strict social distancing at all times.

This time will pass, and I am praying that our nation – indeed all nations – might have the fortitude and patience to do what we all need to do, in a huge national effort to reduce case numbers for the sake of one another, our businesses, and our children.

And I want to remind us of two things. Firstly, many have compared this to a war situation. The bombs are falling, the threat isn't on a front somewhere else, but in our own towns, and when the air raid siren goes we head for the air raid shelter until the threat is passed. Well, yes and no. Unlike that scenario, we can't spend a night in a shelter and then go back to embracing and sharing cups of tea with one another. The lack of real human contact and physical touch and comfort is the hardest thing to bear. We have to love one another over the telephone, across screens and through closed windows. But, unlike that scenario, there is a guarantee we are safe in our homes. We don't disappear into a scary bunker and worry about a direct hit. We are being asked to stay in the safety of our homes because we really are absolutely safe there. There is nothing to fear. We have around us our own comforts, we can watch TV, listen to music, read books, chat on the phone. I want to encourage us to see this truth as a blessing, and somehow find it within us to support one another in ways we can, saying to each other, 'We can do this, we can get through another week, another month, knowing the end is in sight: it will not be like this for ever. Keep going! Keep the faith!'



And secondly, for those of us who desperately miss worshipping physically together (and I know that also includes the receiving of communion, which I don't underestimate): remember that our worship online, praying together over the telephone, and our own prayer and quiet times at home, are no less significant, and no less in the presence of God than if we were in church.

When the Jewish people in 597BC were captured by the Babylonians and exiled there, leaving homes, businesses, and very significantly their Temple in Jerusalem, their life in captivity raised many fundamental questions. Psalm 137 is a lament over that situation:

'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How could we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?

In other words, how do we find it in our hearts to praise God and sing songs to him (which we ARE allowed to do in our own home!)? And even more importantly, how do we worship when we are cut off from our Temple, where God lives?

What the Jewish faith learnt, which transformed their theology forever, is that God didn't live in the Temple. He came with them, wherever they went. Ezekiel the prophet, writing during the Exile, shares an extraordinary vision of this. Ezekiel 1.1 'In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.'

He goes on to describe these strange visions, but what is clear is that in chapter 10 he sees 'the glory of the Lord' leave the Temple in Jerusalem, and travel to join the exiles by the river. Recognising that they didn't have to worship God in the Temple, but could worship in small gatherings at home because God was with them there too, changed the Israelites. Their gatherings became 'synagogues' (synagogue is simply a Hebrew word meaning 'gathering') and their prayers, rituals and worship began to happen in the home as well as in small gatherings. Their faith, our mother faith, has always been better at recognising the place of worship at home.

In this current exile from church buildings, let us rediscover this great richness, and encourage one another in ways we can to praise God, through times of light and joy, through times of darkness and difficulty. The Christmas message of Emmanuel – which means 'God is with us' – is for all seasons. God is for life, not just for Christmas... Our own bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and God lives within and around us. Nothing can take that away. Nothing can separate us from God's presence.

In this season of Epiphany, which is all about glimpsing of God's presence around us, may we discover God's glory for ourselves, and be open to that hope he offers us.

With my love
Revd Helen

THIS SUNDAY'S READING: Mark 4. 1-11

THE COLLECT

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son:
may we recognise him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

A prayer from St Anthony of Padua Church on behalf of Broadstone Churches

Together: We pray for the unemployed and those in financial difficulty in Broadstone. We pray that they will not despair and will have faith, hope and love in Christ.

Special prayers for the sick: Philp, Robert, Bill, Dorothy, David, Joy, Marjorie and Roger.

Years Minds: We remember John Burnett-Thomas and Rita Atterton, whose anniversary of death falls this week.

News



St John's Church
Sadly all public worship has moved online at this time. We are also not able to open for private prayer. All services can be found at www.stjohnschurchbroadstone.org.uk

The graphic includes three small images: a woman in a red top, a church interior with a priest, and a man in a purple shirt.



Food donations for Poole Food Bank 

Food items can be left inside St. John's Church porch on Wednesdays & Sundays 11am – 4:30pm (updated 5th January 2021)

POOLE FOOD BANK Social distancing rules apply and please wear a mask

Visit the Poole foodbank Facebook page for a list of items urgently in need at this time

The graphic features a blue basket filled with various food items and the Poole Food Bank logo.

+ **Local Helpline.** If you have a vulnerable health condition you are being asked to shield once again. The local helpline if you need shopping or prescriptions is 0300 123 7052. They will find you a suitable volunteer to help. However, if you are struggling and the helpline doesn't give you the response you need, please call me directly. We are family and will support one another in all the ways we can! *Revd Helen*

+ **Prayer Partners** - Do you have someone with whom you could 'buddy up' and either pray together over the phone once a week or via Zoom if you have computers? If you do, please arrange this if you wish, and it would be helpful to let us know if you decide to do this and with whom you are praying. If you don't have a prayer partner but would like one, let me know and I will make a list of those who would like to do this and try and pair you up. It would be good for us all to have this sort of support over this time. I can provide some weekly printed prayers to pray together if you are unsure about praying spontaneously over the telephone! *Revd Helen*

+ **Mothers' Union Notice from Ann** - A reminder that your Tribute money (£28.00) is now due. Please make your cheque payable to 'Mothers' Union/Sals Dioc and phone Pat on 01202 691148 if you would like your cheque collected.

✦ **St John's Virtual Coffee Morning** – There is going to be another Coffee Morning at 10am on Friday 15th Jan. Look out for the Zoom link in the email.

✦ **Message from Barbara re Prayer Shawls** I am happy to put in an order in January for wool from Marriner Yarns to knit one of these shawls. Look at their website www.marrineryarns.com and decide your requirements. Their prices are: Double Knitting Wool £1.20 per 100g and Chunky and Super Chunky £1.45 per 100g. If you let me know by January 22nd, I will put an order in. Once the wool is delivered I will let you know and you can collect it on your daily exercise. If you are not going out at all, we can arrange to drop it off to you. Many thanks.

✦ **Lent Groups 2021:** Churches Together will be running online Lent Groups and reading a work called 'Fratelli Tutti' which means 'All brothers and sisters'. It is a book that Pope Francis has just written and absolutely for our times, exploring our world and asking how we can re-envision a better world through loving God and neighbour. We are running sessions on Wednesday evenings and Thursday mornings. It can all be read online, or the book which retails at around £8.99 normally, but we can get cheaper than that through a bulk order. I need to know:

- a) Are you willing to run a group online? It needs no IT skill - we simply gather as a large group on Zoom and we will put you in small 'break-out groups' to discuss questions on a chapter each week, so there is nothing you need to worry about regarding IT.
- b) Would you like to come to one of the groups? If so, please let Revd Helen Bailey know, and tell me if you want to come on Wed evening or Thurs morning.
- c) Tell me if you want to reserve a copy of the book from our bulk order. This will be a firm commitment as once we order the books we shall need to collect payment from you for your copy. Many thanks in advance! *Revd Helen*

Puzzle Corner

It seems an age ago, but here is the solution to the Christmas carol puzzle:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. It came upon the midnight clear | 11. Of the Father's love begotten |
| 2. God rest ye merry, gentlemen | 12. Lullay lulla thou little tiny child |
| 3. Hark! the herald angels sing | 13. Love came down at Christmas |
| 4. We three kings of Orient are | 14. On Christmas night all Christians sing |
| 5. The first Nowell the angel did say | 15. The angel Gabriel from heaven came |
| 6. I saw three ships come sailing in | 16. While Shepherds Watched Their
Flocks by Night |
| 7. Angels from the realms of glory | 17. Ding dong merrily on high |
| 8. O little town of Bethlehem | 18. Good King Wenceslas looked out |
| 9. In the bleak mid-winter | 19. The holly and the ivy |
| 10. Christians, awake! salute the happy
morn | 20. O come all ye faithful |

And the bonus was - We wish you a Merry Christmas (and a Happy New Year)

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Summary Of Guidance From Government Website (Further Details www.gov.uk). We Include This In The Weekly Update With Those Who Do Not Have Access To The Internet For Themselves In Mind.

You must stay at home. The single most important action we can all take is to stay home to protect the NHS and save lives. Follow this guidance immediately. It is now Law.

Leaving home You must not leave, or be outside of your home except where necessary. You may leave the home to:

- shop for basic necessities, for you or a vulnerable person
- go to work, provide voluntary/charitable services, if you cannot do so from home
- exercise with your household (or support bubble) or one other person, limited to once per day, and you should not travel outside your local area.
- meet your [support bubble](#) or [childcare bubble](#) where necessary, but only if you are legally permitted to form one
- seek medical assistance or avoid injury, illness, risk of harm (inc. domestic abuse)
- attend education or childcare - for those eligible.

If you leave home for a permitted reason, stay local in the village, town, or part of the city you live. You may leave your local area for legally permitted reason, eg work. If clinically extremely vulnerable, only go out for medical appointments, exercise, or if essential.

Hands. Face. Space. Approximately 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and could be spreading it without realising it. Remember - 'Hands. Face. Space.'

- hands – wash your hands regularly and for at least 20 seconds
- face: wear a face covering indoors where social distancing may be difficult, where you come into contact with people you do not normally meet
- space: stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (e.g. wear face coverings)

Meeting other people and exercising You should minimise time spent outside your home. It is against the law to meet socially with family or friends unless they are part of your household or support bubble. You can only leave your home to exercise, and not for the purpose of recreation or leisure (e.g. a picnic or a social meeting). This should be limited to once per day, and you should not travel outside your local area.

You can exercise in a public outdoor place: by yourself; with the people you live with; with your support bubble (if you are legally permitted to form one); in a childcare bubble where providing childcare; or, when on your own, with **one** person from another household.

Public outdoor places include: parks, beaches, countryside, forests; public gardens (whether or not you pay to enter them); the grounds of a heritage site; playgrounds

When around other people, stay 2 metres apart from anyone not in your household - meaning the people you live with / [support bubble](#). Where this is not possible, stay 1 metre apart with extra precautions (e.g. wearing a face covering). You must wear a face covering in many indoor settings, such as shops or places of worship where these remain open, and on public transport, unless you are exempt. This is the law.

Support / childcare bubbles You have to meet certain eligibility rules to form a support / childcare bubble. This means not everyone will be able to form a bubble. A [support bubble](#) is a support network which links 2 households. You can form a support bubble with another household of any size only if you meet [eligibility rules](#). It is against the law to form a support bubble if you do not follow these rules.

You are permitted to leave your home to visit your support bubble (and stay overnight with them). However, if you form a support bubble, it is best if with a household who live locally. This will help prevent the virus spreading from an area where more people are infected.

If you live in a household with anyone aged under 14, you can form a [childcare bubble](#). This allows friends or family from one other household to provide informal childcare. You must not meet socially with your childcare bubble, and must avoid seeing members of your childcare and support bubbles at the same time.

Protecting people more at risk from coronavirus If you are clinically vulnerable, you could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. There is additional advice for [people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus](#). Those clinically extremely vulnerable should not attend work, school, college, and limit the time you spend outside the home. You should only go out for medical appointments, exercise or if it is essential.

Travel You must not leave your home unless a reasonable excuse (eg work or education). If you need to travel stay local – avoid travelling outside of your village, town or the part of a city where you live – and look to reduce the number of journeys you make overall. The list of reasons you can leave your home and area include, but are not limited to:

- work, where you cannot reasonably work from home; accessing education and for caring responsibilities; visiting those in your support bubble – or your childcare bubble for childcare; visiting hospital, GP and other medical appointments or visits where you have had an accident or are concerned about your health; buying goods or services you need, but within your local area wherever possible; outdoor exercise. Should be done locally wherever possible, but you can travel a short distance within your area if necessary (eg to access an open space); attending the care and exercise of an animal, or veterinary services

If you need to travel, walk or cycle where possible, and plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport. This will allow you to practice social distancing while you travel.

Avoid car sharing with anyone from outside your household or your support bubble. See the [guidance on car sharing](#). If you need to use public transport, follow [safer travel guidance](#).

Sermon by Revd Helen Bailey
Baptism of Christ – 10th January 2021

An epiphany is when you suddenly see something in a new way. A lightbulb moment: the sudden understanding of an algebraic equation for example – not that I have ever had that particular one myself. Algebra and the Trinity: the two great mysteries in life. It might be the way the morning light falls on a landscape and you see new folds in the hills. It's a moment of revelation, a glimpse of how something is different from how you thought. You see it in a new light. A moment that lets the light of reality stream into our perceptions. I wonder whether the shocking behaviour of Trump's supporters storming congress are actually enabling a lightbulb moment for some Republicans. Judging by the resignations this week, a glimmer of reality may just be breaking through the fantasy narrative of these last four years. Let's hope.

The Christian season of Epiphany is no different. Patrick spoke about the revelation of God last week: through the creation which reveals God's nature, as well as that very particular incidence of the magi coming to see Jesus, and in the Western Church, the main story of Epiphany. The revelation of God to the gentiles, to foreigners, and that wonderful discovery that God's love is not exclusive but embraces all, even us, traditionally outside the faith, as we once were.

The Baptism of Christ is another Epiphany story. For the Orthodox Church, it is *this* which is the main focus of Epiphany. When the heavens are torn open, and we glimpse the Trinity: the Father's voice affirming Jesus; the Son, coming to be baptised which signals a new start to his ministry; and the Holy Spirit, descending dove-like on the scene. In this glorious dance of the Trinity, is the revelation of Jesus as God's Son.

These two stories offer fresh perspectives. It struck me, when hearing the Gospel last week, how pertinent the last line was. The magi, having seen the Christ-child, are warned of the danger of Herod and so leave 'for their own country via another road'. It occurred to me, that is what we have been doing all year, and what we go on doing this year – trying to get back home, to all the things we love, via another road. Because the usual road is closed off, not because of Herod, but because of Covid. It has been a year of finding other roads. How do we worship? How do we pray? How do we laugh, share, comfort, tell our stories, when we are apart? And all over this nation, churches, and the endlessly innovative species that is the human being, have been finding other roads. Some of those have led us to surprises we couldn't have imagined, if we'd simply been doing the journey on old familiar road we'd always done. Our congregation has grown, with new members watching services online. Our housebound are joining in with our services for the first time. This new road has been far from easy, and not what we would have chosen, but we have found some unexpected blessing along the way. We've had our own revelations. Because we've had to do it differently, we've had to see it differently. And we have rediscovered, not just the possibility but the necessity of, worship in the home. The Jewish faith has known this for a long time. Perhaps we are starting to cotton on.

They say that when one door shuts, another opens. Unlooked-for opportunities, when our plans are frustrated, can bring unexpected gifts. Road closures are always a right pain. The current Clarendon Rd / West Way road closure is, I am sure, causing circuitous journeys for many of us. In life, when a particular road closes to us, even for a time, it is inconvenient, uncomfortable, distressing, deeply disappointing. But it often causes us to re-evaluate our life, sort out what to let go of and what to keep. To look at what is possible. It becomes a crossroads moment, where we make changes. Some of that will be for the better, even if it doesn't feel like it right now.

The Baptism of Christ is also about another pathway. It is a moment that confirms to Jesus he will not be leading an ordinary life. That the calling on his life as God's Son will lead him by another road. It's no accident that immediately after his baptism, the Spirit drives Jesus out into the wilderness. There, in that place where the angels attend and the demons taunt, he lets go, of the pathway he has been on. He senses the new direction, the road ahead opening up, and resisting the possibility of refusing this call – that's what the trials and temptations are all about – he prepares himself for this new road. Knowing he is God's Son is one thing; knowing how that calling is to be lived, is another. And it is in the rocky unmade road of the wilderness he learns, through sweat and prayer, and probably tears, the ministry and life required of him. Places of wilderness or difficulty often bring clarity on new direction.

Jesus' baptism is not just going along with it in order to set a precedent that Christianity will later adopt and adapt as an initiation into faith. It is not simply identifying with human need for a fresh start as an example. Jesus' baptism is life-changing: dramatic, a commitment to a new life, and a fresh road of challenges. A road that will eventually lead him to Jerusalem. Or rather, through Jerusalem, because the cross isn't the destination. A road that leads through Jerusalem to resurrection, renewal of life. Opening that source of life to you and me.

Similarly, neither is our own baptism just going along with it because of habit or ritual. Nor simply wishful thinking for a fresh start, a quaint custom we keep going. Our baptism is also life-changing, dramatic, a commitment to a new life, and a fresh road of challenges. Did they warn you of that, or warn your parents, when you were signed up for this? Did you know baptism changes you for ever? Because it sets you on a new road, with all its bumps, pot holes, missed turns, closures, redirected routes... but nevertheless a road you will never regret having discovered.

Pray for the spiritual eyes that Epiphany urges us to have, to see new things along the way, to sense the route God leads us on. Pray for the courage to let go of the old familiar roads so comfortable to us, and embark on a journey of twists and turns, and yet untold possibilities, discoveries and blessings, with the Holy Spirit strength we are given to ride out the rough with the smooth, to live out our calling as God's sons and daughters, to whom he also says, 'My child, with you I am well-pleased'. Amen.