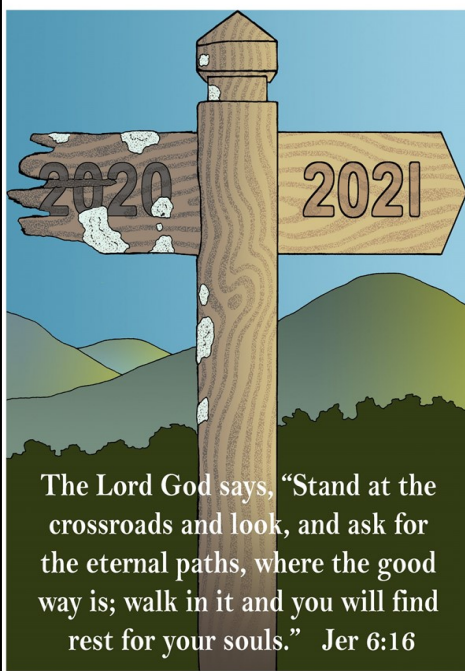


# The Voice of St Paul's

January

2021



The Lord God says, "Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the eternal paths, where the good way is; walk in it and you will find rest for your souls." Jer 6:16

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## A Letter from Revd Liz Rowles

I always picture New Year as a long winding path covered in newly fallen snow, no marks on it, no footprints; it is just waiting for me to make my mark on it. It seems appropriate that, as I sit down to write this, the world outside my window is covered in a thin layer of snow.

2020 was not the year any of us wanted or expected. No one knows what 2021 will look like, we can only be responsible for the marks we make on it. So, as we gather round the crib for the last few days, as we contemplate the gifts the wise men brought to Jesus, as we pack away our Christmas decorations for another year, what are our thoughts about the New Year? What marks will we leave? Do we carry the Hope that Jesus has taught us to carry? Do we carry the light that he has brought into the world? Can we carry the hands, feet and heart of Jesus onto that unblemished path of 2021?

At St. Paul's we will begin the New Year with a time of prayer for 2021. If you are able, please join us on **Epiphany, Wednesday 6th January at 7pm** for a contemplative service of prayer and music and remembering the kings arriving at the stable to pay homage to the new King. And, as we pray the prayers that the community have left on our Advent

prayer tree, we will remember the year we have had and look forward to the New Year in front of us.

We pray that you will all have, peace, love, health and happiness in 2020 and look forward to seeing you.

When the carols  
Have been stilled.  
When the star-topped tree  
Is taken down.  
When family and friends  
Are gone home.  
When we get back to our schedules  
**THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS BEGINS**  
To welcome the refugee,  
To heal a broken planet,  
To feed the hungry,  
To build bridges of trust,  
Not walls of fear.  
To share our gifts.  
To seek justice and peace  
For all people.  
To bring Christ's light  
To the world.

*(Michael Dougherty - a variation on Howard Thurman's "when the song of the angels is stilled")*

## A Prayer for Epiphany



*Father God, the star that led the Magi to the stable announced to the world that its Saviour was born. Today we live in a world that is still covered by darkness, and still needing to make that journey to the stable door. May our lives reflect your light day by day, as we seek to serve where you have placed us, that we might be the means through which others can encounter Jesus Christ. Amen*

*faithandworship.com*

## Current Services at St Paul's

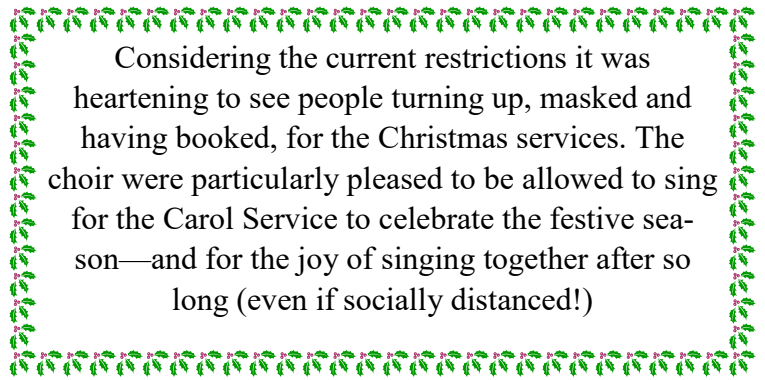
**Sunday: 9am** Service of the Word on Zoom  
**10.45am** Parish Eucharist in church—please remember to wear a mask. There is no singing but there will be musical interludes.

**Wednesday: 9am** Morning prayer on Zoom

**Tuesday & Friday: 8.30pm** Compline on Zoom

For further details please contact

Revd. Helen: 0161 432 1227



Considering the current restrictions it was heartening to see people turning up, masked and having booked, for the Christmas services. The choir were particularly pleased to be allowed to sing for the Carol Service to celebrate the festive season—and for the joy of singing together after so long (even if socially distanced!)

*Many thanks to everyone who donated to the appeal for local families who needed assistance with food. We managed to provide 11 families who really needed help, with a good supply of fresh and non perishable food items and Christmas treats. We have been asked if we can continue to support them into the New Year, a time which is often even more difficult for these families, so please continue to give if you are able.*



## Sunday 24th January: St Paul's Patronal Festival

This month, on 25<sup>th</sup> January, the Church celebrates probably the most famous conversion of all. At least, what happened to a young man called Saul on the road to Damascus has become a byword for all instant conversions – what is known as a ‘damascene’ moment (which is strikingly portrayed in the central 3 lower lights of our own East window, erected in 1897).

Saul was a devout Jew, a Pharisee, a student of Gamaliel and a fierce critic of the followers of Jesus, then a very new sect on the religious scene. On his way to Damascus to start a purge of Christians in

that city, he was blinded by a bright light and heard a voice saying, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ He asked the identity of the voice, and was told: ‘Jesus, whom you are persecuting’. Stunned by the experience, he followed further instructions which led him to a Christian man in Damascus, who prayed with him. As he did, Saul’s sight was restored.

The experience convinced Paul that Jesus – crucified in Jerusalem four or five years earlier – was in fact the Messiah and had risen from the dead. After a period of instruction, Saul was baptised and took the name Paul. At first, some Christians were wary about the reality of his conversion, but over a period of time he was accepted and indeed eventually recognised as an ‘apostle’, a ‘special messenger’ of Jesus Christ. His intellectual stature and leadership gifts quickly marked him out, and within a few years he became a leading figure in the emerging Christian Church, preaching and founding churches all over the Middle East, largely of Gentile converts. He was eventually martyred in Rome, probably in 65AD.

Paul was the first intellectual of the Christian Church, the man who was able to set the events of the life and teaching of Jesus, and especially His death and resurrection, into a coherent theology, with its roots very clearly in the Jewish faith of his own upbringing.

Many people think of Paul as a rather negative, narrow misogynist, but even a quick reading of his letters actually reveals a person of great warmth, who evoked enormous affection and devotion from others. ‘You would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me!’ he writes to the Christians at Galatia. As for the charge that Paul disliked women, even a quick read of his letters will reveal how large a role women played in his churches. In terms of the first century, St Paul was a dangerous liberal! So, all in all, the amazing Paul of Tarsus deserves a bit of celebrating on 25<sup>th</sup> January.

*Parish Pump*