

## Morning Service 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021

*Welcome to our first service of the New Year, unfortunately back online due to the rising number of covid19 cases locally. Thank you for joining us for this morning service, whether you're watching live on facebook or catching up on youtube. I'm Rev John Musson, vicar of Cudham and Downe and I'm joined by Helen Musson, Ordinand at St Augustines college and who's also looking forward to becoming curate at Christ Church Orpington in September 2021.*

*You'll find the words of the service on the church website [pcd.org.uk](http://pcd.org.uk). Please say the words in **bold***

*We've still got our Christmas tree up – it's not yet 12<sup>th</sup> night, and we're focusing on the Epiphany – the visit of the Magi, the Wise Men, to the baby Jesus. Listening to God sometimes takes us in surprising directions and from unexpected people as we shall see.*

### The Greeting and opening prayer

It's 2021 - A new year has begun.  
Let us leave behind all that is past,  
and walk together into the future.  
Let us trust in the God of new beginnings,  
and worship the God of fresh hopes. Let's pray together:-

Lord of our journeys,  
help us this day to have  
eyes to see your leading,  
ears to hear your guidance,  
and a heart of courage,  
that we may journey faithfully and find your way –  
even when the path may seem difficult and dark  
**Amen.**

Glorious Lord, we your sons and daughters  
come together into your kingly presence.  
We lift our eyes to you, seeking your guiding light  
and offering up our gifts of worship and praise.

**Amen.**

**HYMN – as with gladness**

- 1** As with gladness men of old  
did the guiding star behold,  
as with joy they hailed its light,  
leading onward, beaming bright;  
so, most gracious Lord, may we  
evermore be led to thee.
  
- 2** As with joyful steps they sped,  
to that lowly manger-bed,  
there to bend the knee before  
him whom heaven and earth adore;  
so may we with willing feet  
ever seek thy mercy-seat.
  
- 3** As they offered gifts most rare  
at that manger rude and bare,  
so may we with holy joy,  
pure and free from sin's alloy,  
all our costliest treasures bring,  
Christ, to thee, our heavenly King.
  
- 4** Holy Jesu, every day  
keep us in the narrow way,  
and, when earthly things are past,  
bring our ransomed souls at last  
where they need no star to guide,  
where no clouds thy glory hide.
  
- 5** In the heavenly country bright

need they no created light;  
thou its light, its joy, its crown,  
thou its sun which goes not down;  
there for ever may we sing  
alleluias to our King.

***We now spend time reflecting on our need to say sorry and to hear God forgive us. We shall be hearing in our bible reading how the wise men first of all looked in the wrong place:-***

Lord, just as the wise men set out into new territory in search of you, help us to step out of life's narrow tramlines.

**Forgive us for seeking you only in areas we know and in which we are comfortable.**

In their day, the wise men were outsiders,  
yet were guided by a star and spoken to in a dream;  
their steps directed for your purpose.

**Forgive us when we fail to see – or even dismiss – your leading from unexpected places and unlikely people.**

*(a moment to pause and reflect)*

**Lord, forgive us.**

**Widen our vision and expand our minds  
to search and discern you in all places and people,  
that we may be drawn closer to you.**

**Amen.**

Father God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ  
to be born in a lowly manger;  
a heavenly king worshipped by earthly kings,  
yet destined to walk to the cross.

Through his blood shed on the cross:

we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

**Amen.**

## **Prayer for Today – Epiphany**

Creator of the heavens, who led the wise men 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.**

## **Bible Reading: Matthew 2:1-12**

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

## Talk

Happy New Year! I hope the rather strange and different Christmas wasn't too bad – we managed a zoom chat with the grandchildren and a family quiz the other evening. Lots to be thankful for as well as sadness at not seeing everyone we expected to. Thanks to all those who watched our online services over Christmas, hope you enjoyed them – and if you haven't seen them yet, they are still there on the Cudham and Downe Church YouTube channel – please subscribe to the channel too!

Epiphany – a strange word for a strange event. The word simply means 'appearing' or 'revelation' – seeing things – did you 'see' the star last week – what might have been the event 2000 years ago seen in the skies recently – the conjunction of planets Saturn and Jupiter looking like a bright star travelling across the sky – these Wise men, better called Magi, saw this and using the theories of their day, felt it pointed to a major event, a new king born – and due to its direction – in the East of where they came from.

But that's getting ahead of ourselves. There's one question that always challenges me when we read Matthew 2 and the events of the wise men visiting the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. And it's not about the gifts, significant though they are, but just how they were guided.

- 1) They were guided by a star – Psalm 19:1 says 'the heavens are telling the glory of God' – God's glory seen all around us point us to something beyond ourselves – but did you notice this isn't enough
- 2) They were guided to the wrong place. They used their human intelligence and went where they thought a king would be born – in a Royal palace – in this case Jerusalem – again, this wasn't enough-human wisdom only takes us so far.
- 3) In Herod's palace did you notice it was his advisors that directed the wise men to Bethlehem – and did you notice how? They opened their bibles and quoted from the Prophet Micah- from Bethlehem will come the new ruler of God's people; yes, a new

King of Israel will come from there – it must have taken them some courage to say that in front of Herod, knowing his reputation!

Time for a pause.... So, Herod's advisers pointed out that what the Wise Man had discerned from the star and their own wisdom was true – a new King of Israel had been born – what now – what should they do.

Here comes the oddest thing of all – who was it who told them what to do next – from his own insecurity, it's clear – Herod says 'Go and search carefully for the child' – they now had a decision to make – do they trust God enough to take Herod's advice. They do. They go to Bethlehem still guided by the star but with the word of God now showing them where. And they find the King – not in the Royal palace – but there with Mary – and did you notice what they did as they gave their gifts – they bowed down and worshipped. They identified in this baby that he was who Herod's advisers had said – a new King, and more than a King – someone worthy of their worship.

I wonder if that might be a challenge to us as we begin what we hope is a Happy New Year – whose voice do we listen to, and how do we discern the will of God – sometimes it might be through the people we expect least, and always it will be in God's unchangeable word – and God's word always calls us to act – to step out in faith and to discover him as the wise men did – this baby born in Bethlehem is the King of all and worthy of our worship still today. Let's make the next prayer our own:-

Father God, full of wisdom and power,  
whose mighty arm stretches over all the earth:  
**we bow down in humble adoration.**

Holy Saviour, full of grace, lighting up our world:  
**we bow down in humble adoration.**

Spirit of the living God,  
full of the boundless riches available to us in Christ:  
**Father, Son and Holy Spirit; three in one:**

**we bow down in humble adoration,  
open to your direction. Amen.**

## **The Creed**

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## **The prayers –**

Lord of all our journeys,  
we pray for those searching for warmth and safety,  
for those fleeing persecution and violence,  
for those in temporary accommodation because their homes have been  
flooded or damaged –  
remembering particularly those affected by Storm Bella and by the  
earthquake in Croatia.  
Jesus child of the crib;  
**bless them with the gifts of hope and courage  
and may they find security in you.**

Lord of all our ups and downs,  
we pray for those searching for peace of mind,  
for those struggling with depression, eating disorders,

addictions...and for their families,  
for those facing the new year with sadness of heart,  
or little sense of purpose,  
for those who face it alone.

Jesus child of the crib;

**bless them with the gifts of hope and courage  
and may they find comfort in you.**

Lord of all wisdom,  
we pray for those searching for clarity and stability,  
for businesses adapting to new trade agreements,  
for farmers and fishermen,  
for teachers and students amid uncertain term times  
and new ways of learning,  
for those in industries unsure when they can re-open  
and struggling with new regulations,  
for scientists challenged by new variants of the Covid-19 virus,  
for those desperate to see their families again.

Jesus child of the crib;

**bless them with the gifts of hope and courage  
and may they find reassurance in you.**

Lord of love,  
we pray for those searching for work,  
for those whose work is exhausting –  
remembering especially those in the NHS and the emergency services,  
for carers and those administering the new vaccines  
and for those who will receive it,  
for those searching for ways to feed their families and pay their bills,  
and for those charities and organisations trying to help them.

Jesus child of the crib;

**bless them with the gifts of hope and courage  
and may they find strength in you.**

Lord of us all,  
we pray for those searching for faith amid anxiety and loss,  
for your church as she reaches out to those who are isolated,  
grieving, or battling with big questions,  
and we pray for one another as we seek to offer our time  
and resources to our communities and those most in need.  
Jesus child of the crib;  
**bless us all with the gifts of hope and courage  
and may we find peace in you. Amen.**

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,  
so in faith and trust we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## **HYMN – what child is this?**

**1      What child is this, who, laid to rest  
         on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
         whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
         while shepherds watch are keeping?  
         This, this is Christ the King,  
         whom shepherds worship and angels sing:**

**haste, haste to bring him praise  
the babe, the son of Mary.**

**2**      **Why lies he in such mean estate,  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Come have no fear, God's son is here,  
his love all loves exceeding.  
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through,  
the cross be borne for me, for you:  
hail, hail the Saviour comes,  
the babe, the son of Mary.**

**3**      **So bring him incense, gold and myrrh,  
all tongues and peoples own him,  
the King of kings salvation brings,  
let every heart enthrone him:  
Raise, raise your song on high  
while Mary sings her lullaby.  
Joy, joy, for Christ is born  
the babe, the son of Mary.**

## **Closing prayer**

**Help me to look for you** (*mime looking through binoculars*)

**in any place** (*open arms wide*)

**and in anybody** (*look around at other people*).

Lord, as we start a new year...

we do not know what this year will bring...

When I am happy...

When I am sad...

When I am not sure...

When I am very busy...

All the time...

**Amen.**

*Thank you for joining us in worship today. Details of our next services are found on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PCDChurches/> where you can watch the service live or catch up later, and you'll find this week's notice sheet and other useful information on the church website [pcd.org.uk](http://pcd.org.uk)*

*Please also contact the Vicar, Rev John Musson or Rev Rach Archer if you need any help or just for a chat! [vicar@pcd.org.uk](mailto:vicar@pcd.org.uk) 01959540012*

## **Blessing**

Lord, as we continue our journey with you this week,  
as we seek to live out our faith every day,  
be with us, surprise with your love,  
nudge us when you want us  
to see or do something new –  
And may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
Be with you and remain with you throughout this year.

**Amen.**