

**The Diocese of Chester  
Cycle of Prayer  
Sunday, 3 January to Saturday, 30 January 2021**



**Sunday, 3 January 2021**

Second Sunday of Christmas

'And the Word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1.14a). In the 1890s William Preece was chief engineer of the General Post Office. He was no enthusiast for the telephone and when he was asked by a parliamentary committee about this new gadget he said, 'There are conditions in America which necessitate the use of such instruments more than here. Here we have a super-abundance of messengers, errand boys and things of that kind. The absence of servants has compelled America to adopt communications systems for domestic purposes. Few have worked at the telephone much more than I have, I have one in my office but more for show. If I want to send a message – I employ a boy to take it' [as reported in *History of Office Life* by Lucy Kellaway, BBC Digital, 2013].

The only 'personal messages' I receive nowadays are those that label themselves as personal but are actually produced by a computer. They don't convince; I often delete them without opening them. Being selected by a clever computer programme and sent a slick message full of personal references comes across as devious. In an actual conversation provoked by such a message recently – and it was no easy task to find a living person to talk to – the person dealing with my enquiry said, 'I know this is creepy, but is your second name Paul and did you used to live at ...?' Creepy indeed because I had never given that information to the organisation for which he worked. Personalization is often about the analysis of massive quantities of data far beyond any individual's knowledge or capability.

God speaks to us, is among us, in human dimensions. We celebrate the personal. Not algorithms beyond our ken; nor teasing mock connections, nor messages designed to fool us, but 'grace and truth' in flesh. 'If I want to send a message – I employ a boy to take it,' said Preece. And that is exactly what the God of the cosmos has done. 'The Word became flesh' – there is no more personal message than that. If you want to hear the message – see the boy who brings it.

*Archbishop Mouneer Hanna Anis, The Episcopal / Anglican Province of Alexandria.*

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**Monday, 4 January 2021**

**1607 Hollingworth**

C: Bruce Perrin. LM: Stephen Cook, Jan Malpas, Joyce Blundell.

*Abakaliki, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

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**Tuesday, 5 January 2021**

**1608 Hyde St George with St Thomas**

C: Jeremy Bentliff, Callum Boothroyd. LM: Diane Deakins, David Hollington, Barbara Hollington, Susan Nykorak, Marjorie Trueman, Katy Jones.

Hyde St George's C of E School.

*Aberdeen & Orkney, The Scottish Episcopal Church.*

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**Wednesday, 6 January 2021**

**The Epiphany**

*You have come to us as a small child, but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of eternal love.*

St Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153

**1611 Millbrook**

C: Tim Hayes, Chris Viney.

*Abuja, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

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**Thursday, 7 January 2021**

**1612 Mottram-in-Longdendale**

C: Catherine Walker. LM: Alan Standeven, John Walker.

Broadbottom C of E School. Mottram C of E School.

*Abyei, The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan.*

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**Friday, 8 January 2021**

**1613 Newton in Mottram with Flowery Field**

C: Sheila O'Flaherty. LM: Sara Burgess, Linda Marshall.

*Accra, The Church of the Province of West Africa.*

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**Saturday, 9 January 2021**

**1615 Stalybridge Holy Trinity**

C: Gary Kennaugh, Simon Stride. LM: Barry Edge, Chris Gascogine, Clive Hustwick, David Monday, Bea Calow.

Pray for a fresh vision for 2021. To build on our community work, especially the Love Stalybridge Project; for fresh expressions of church; to reach young people in the parish.

*Adelaide, The Anglican Church of Australia.*

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## **Sunday, 10 January 2021**

### **The Baptism of Christ (The First Sunday of Epiphany)**

The world's 22 richest men have more money than ALL the women in Africa, according to the Oxfam study *Time to Care*, published last year. It also disclosed that the world had at that point 2,152 billionaires and their wealth was more than the combined wealth of 60% of the world's population. These gross inequalities have been made even worse by the pandemic.

Such stark contrasts beg the question where the centre of power lies? Governments can appear puny by comparison, and local communities mere pawns in structures far beyond their influence. In the Judean world in which Jesus was brought up, the centre of power in religious, national, and even world terms was Jerusalem, despite Roman imperial hegemony. If the billionaires of our contemporary world provoke questions about where the centre and margins of power lie, so too the ancient status accorded to Jerusalem questions the significance of the then contemporary and dominant military and economic power. Chapter 60 of Isaiah is but one of many passages of Scripture that envisage Jerusalem as the very centre of the world to which all peoples will one day submit.

It is therefore incredibly significant that the people of Jerusalem were going out into the wilderness to receive John the Baptist's call. He is proclaiming a baptism of repentance – a complete turning around of people's lives and loyalties. It is as if he is saying, 'Don't look to what the powerful say is the centre of things but turn around and look to the wilderness.' It is in the marginal places and amongst the marginal people (in the eyes of the powerful) that the change begins. Jesus adds his 'Amen' to that turned-around beginning by being baptized. God calls his people out of the wildernesses of their lives.

*Archbishop Philip Richardson, The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.*

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## **Monday, 11 January 2021**

### **1616 Stalybridge St Paul**

C: Emma Handley. LM: Jacintha Manchester, John Clements.

Stalybridge St Paul's C of E School.

*Afikpo, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

**Tuesday, 12 January 2021**

**1617 Tintwistle**

C: Bruce Perrin. LM: Joyce Blundell.

Tintwistle C of E School.

*North Africa, The Episcopal / Anglican Province of Alexandria.*

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**Wednesday, 13 January 2021**

**Wirral North Deanery**

*The Horn of Africa, The Episcopal / Anglican Province of Alexandria.*

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**Thursday, 14 January 2021**

**0801 Barnston**

C: Vacant, Chris Murphy. LM: Jayne McCallum, David Reed, Anne Vassie, David Williams, Lynn Alexander, Marjorie Burden, Eileen Handley, Chrissie Irlam, Ali Johnson, Carol Jordan.

Please pray for the church as we look for a new incumbent, that we would have a clear sense of our priorities and purpose, and would grow together through the process. Please pray for those taking on extra responsibility during the vacancy, particularly Chris Murphy the Associate Minister, Rob Moots and Bob Fiddaman the Churchwardens, and Cecelia Oliver the Church Administrator. May this be a time of greater focus and greater dependance on God.

*Agra, The (United) Church of North India.*

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**Friday, 15 January 2021**

**0802 Bebington**

C: David Vestergaard, Al Rodgers. LM: Judith Battersby, Ian Halliday, Helen Thomas, David Jack, Amy Haigh.

Please pray for us as, like most churches, we work out the way forward and the best way of carrying out our mission during and post-covid.

Bebington St Andrew's C of E School.

*Aguata, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

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**Saturday, 16 January 2021**

**0803 Frankby with Greasby**

C: Ken Owen, Danny Sedano.

*Ahoadá, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

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**Sunday, 17 January 2021**

**The Second Sunday of Epiphany**

'Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1.46). In our world of performance tables, targets, strategic planning, and core task management, inevitably the things of that world spills over into this world of worship. Nathanael is recorded as being sceptical when Philip approaches him. Many, many people are sceptical about what we are doing. Not because they are sceptical about God necessarily, but because they don't see the need for all this worship. They see what we do as a nonsense, quite literally. It doesn't make sense to them.

But because the idea of worship comes hard to many doesn't mean that faith amounts to foolish credulity. Surely Christians are hard-headed realists when it comes to human experience. That's one of the things Nathanael's scepticism reassures us about. He doesn't accept news of the Messiah with naïve gullibility. The tensions are recognised. His outlook on life will be radically challenged, but first the news must become part of his pre-existing intellectual and cultural make up.

The gospel is always radically new, a turning about, a turning around of the way things are, but that begins in an honest acknowledgment of the way things are. Faith sees the world differently, but it is never indifferent to the way the world is. We are blessed by God with an alternative reality.

I am sure it is no coincidence that the name Nathanael literally means 'gift of God.' Nathanael's encounter with Christ begins in an all-too understandable cynicism, but he will come to see the glories of heaven in the person of Jesus. We too are to live in that alternative reality, that vision gifted to us by God, even when it comes hard.

*Archbishop Geoffrey Smith, The Anglican Church of Australia.*

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## **Monday, 18 January 2021**

### **0804 Great Meols**

C: Gillian Rossiter, Frances Skinner. LM: Lesley Young, David Moss, Chris Branch, Julia Johnson, Sheena Wilson.

Please pray for our ongoing outreach to our community and give thanks for the many people we have got to know through the pandemic. Thank God for their help and support and that they may come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

*Aipo Rongo, The Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea.*

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## **Tuesday, 19 January 2021**

### **0805 Heswall**

C: Martin Cannam, Josh Carlson. LM: Michael Barritt, Jennie Hewitt, Peter Twin, Brenda Wilson, Andrew Field-Davies.

Heswall St Peter's C of E School.

*Ajayi Crowther, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

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## **Wednesday, 20 January 2021**

### **0806 Higher Bebington**

C: Mike Loach, Eunice Blackmore, George Roach. LM: Pam Hollinshead, Ted Jones, Jill Wright, June Fogg.

*Akobo, The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan.*

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## **Thursday, 21 January 2021**

### **0807 Hoylake**

C: Paul Rossiter, John Harrison, Richard Skinner. LM: Peter Ham, Jill Rawcliffe.

Hoylake Holy Trinity C of E School.

*Akoko, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

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## **Friday, 22 January 2021**

### **0809 New Ferry**

C: Andy Greenhough. LM: Mike Gillam, Jim Cartwright.

*Akoko Edo, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

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## **Saturday, 23 January 2021**

### **0810 Newton West Kirby**

C: Cheryl Coverley, Ailsa Whorton. LM: Anthony Hart, Mike Smith.

*Akot, The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan.*

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**Sunday, 24 January 2021**

The Third Sunday of Epiphany

The story of the wedding in the village of Cana doesn't end where our reading of it ended (John 2.1-11). There's another verse – but it's hardly ever read in public. It says: 'After this, he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers and his disciples; and they stayed there for a few days' (John 2.12).

Well, that doesn't seem especially important, you might say. But hang on a bit. It's the 'stayed there' that's worth thinking on – *emeinan*/remained – from the word *menoo*. Yes, lodge, stay, dwell, remain, are all adequate translations. But I'm certain it could also mean 'rest'. Could it be the gospel writer is telling us that this wedding had been such an amazing party that they had to rest for a few days after it – they had had such a humdinger of a knees-up that they needed to sleep it off!? That's how the ministry of Jesus begins in John's account of it – at the least it tells us that God wants his people to have a real humdinger every so often! We all long for a Covid-safe world where that might again be a possibility.

Parties or not, might this incident be about how to get out of those times when everything seems flat – fizz-less? When life seems so very ordinary or even oppressively repetitive, like the water in the gospel. Boring! What we need to do is to change our lives, change our outlook, change our attitudes. There are all kinds of ways of doing that, even in these times of restriction and isolation. Think of ways you might bring even a smidgen of fizz to someone else's life – an unprompted postcard, a call, help with something practical, a simple anonymous kindness. In other words, and in the gospel writer's language, some small thing that allows God's Spirit to enter our lives. Live it up! Let there be some fizz!

Gospel living is always moving forward towards eternity – not optimism, not a naïve belief in inevitable progress, but the certainty of God as our goal. God is not stingy. The miracle of the water turned into wine is the transformation of the past into a new and quite wonderful present and future. This is a momentum towards God that changes the way we look at everything. Let there be some fizz! The promise of better times.

*Archbishop Samuel Sunil Mankhin, The Church of Bangladesh.*

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**Monday, 25 January 2021**

The Conversion of Paul

**0811 Thurstaston**

C: Jane Turner. LM: Alan Jones.

Please pray that the outward looking focus towards the wider community that we experienced during lockdown is not lost, and that we will continue to reflect; learn and grow from the experiences of 2020.

Thurstaston Dawpool C of E School.

*Akure, The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).*

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**Tuesday, 26 January 2021**

**0812 Upton (Overchurch)**

C: Nicola Eastwood, Alec Ham. LM: Peter Davies, Malcolm Haigh, Lorraine Williams, Laura Arnold, Rhonda Anson, Kenneth London, Alison Collins, Gaynor Kydd, Rebecca Steele, Cat Farrell, Malcolm Kydd.

*Alabama, The Episcopal Church, USA.*

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**Wednesday, 27 January 2021**

**0813 West Kirby St Andrew**

C: Vacant. LM: Ken Jones.

*Alaska, The Episcopal Church, USA.*

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**Thursday, 28 January 2021**

**0814 West Kirby St Bridget**

C: Alex Williams, David Chester. LM: Graham Crowder, John Smith, Brian Dodd, Mary Lynch.

West Kirby St Bridget's C of E School.

*Saint Albans, The Church of England.*

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**Friday, 29 January 2021**

**0815 Poulton Lancelyn**

C: Roger Wiles, Paul Lewis. LM: Alan Jones.

*Albany, The Episcopal Church, USA.*

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**Saturday, 30 January 2021**

**Nantwich Deanery**

*Algoma, The Anglican Church of Canada.*