

Thursday 7 January 2021

Dear Friends,

With the Epiphany season now in full swing we leave the manger and on Sunday our worship leads us forward 30 years to stand on the banks of the River Jordan to witness Jesus' baptism. The Gospel reading on Sunday ends with the voice from heaven declaring that "you are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:4-11). In normal times I would be pleased to stop there, but as we face the challenges of this new year I feel the need to continue reading so that we can include the next two verses. If we read on, St Mark tells us that from the moment of his baptism 'the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness' (v12). I don't know about you, but I feel as though I have been driven out from the twinkly, comforting light of our Christmas celebrations into the harsh wilderness of a new year which feels dark, alien and threatening and not at all where I want to be. Jesus' wilderness experiences are explored much more fully during Lent of course, but for us now, as we enter a new year and continue to face the horrors of a seemingly never-ending and unpredictable global pandemic, I think we might find some comfort and strength in what another evangelist tells us about Jesus' wilderness experience following his baptism. We read in Matthew's gospel that when Jesus was exhausted from his struggles, angels came and waited on him (Matthew 4:11).

Angels come in many forms and guises, and over the last few months we have been waited on by some of them: In his great age Captain Tom brought good news to the NHS through his remarkable achievements and stirred us all on to lift our eyes heavenward and be inspired by the kindness of the human heart; footballer Marcus Rashford has ministered to hungry children and their anxious parents and made their voices heard; and Mother Julian of Norwich continues to send re-assuring messages of hope from her cell in 14th century Norwich, reminding us that through the love of God in Christ all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. One angel who has ministered to me recently with his powerful affirming and inspiring messages of hope has been the artist Charlie Mackesy, and if you haven't been introduced then let me do the honours. Charlie is the author of a book called 'The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse – it's a comfort blanket of a read and at times when life feels chaotic and the storm raging around us threatens to overwhelm and consume, Charlie's unlikely travelling companions offer wise insightful truths to guide us out of our wilderness experiences.

At a time when so many people want nothing to do with organised religion, Charlie shines a light on Love (with a capital 'L'), and the beauty of the human soul. Charlie has a deep and profound Christian faith, but he speaks from his own experience of feeling excluded by the Church and baffled by the rules and regulations which are unhelpful when people struggle with life. Charlie's gift is to make Christ real, his illustrations have the power to bring the love of God and the message of redemption to those who are at the end of their tether and exhausted by their struggle. There isn't room here to do Charlie's ministry justice, but put his name into any search engine and you will quickly discover more. If I were to share just three of Charlie's messages with you today as we continue together on our journey through 2021, it would be these:

"Courage is a gentle thing: when the way ahead seems too dark and the path unclear, just to take one single step is enough"

"Sometimes just getting up and carrying on is brave and magnificent"

"This storm is real, and our fear is real", said the horse. "But our love is also real, and in the end love wins".

Anne, Neil and Wilma

This week the letter has been written by Rev'd Anne Crawford

Please pray for:

...**Fr. Jamil Khadir and the Anglican congregations in Nablus** in the West Bank and the Anglican Church in Beirut

...**Christ's School**, for staff and students

...**Glass Door Staff**, and for volunteers providing hot food for the homeless this winter.

...**the sick and those in need** – Hermione Lockyer, Ron Bond, Madge Thorns, Valerie Llewellyn, Bob Smith, Molly Lambert, Sarah Swanson, Joy Clarke, Chris O'Toole, Patricia Doling, Dolly May, Harold Gill, Roz Hogan, Alan Sykes, Kate Muammer

...**the departed, may they rest in peace** – Nick Carpenter, Paul Kavanagh

Church, Community and other news:

In-person services continue at St Mary Magdalene this Sunday at 8.00am, 9.30am and 6.30pm. Their 9.30am service will also be live-streamed via their Facebook page (please see below for the link) and it can be watched live if you have a Facebook account. The Sunday service at St John the Divine (11.00am) will be live-stream only via their Facebook page (see link below). If you don't have access to Facebook, you will be able to view the services from our website once the links have been uploaded, usually on a Monday. The Sunday service at St Matthias (at 9.30am) will be via Zoom – [please contact Anne](#) for log-in details.

As usual we will be asking members of our congregations to maintain social distance when they come to church, or to remain in their social bubble, and not to embrace or shake hands during the Peace – a friendly wave and a smile will be the greeting – and remember to wear a face covering in church, unless you are exempt from doing so. Although there will be paper copies of the order of service available for those who would like one (these paper copies will 'belong' to you alone – please take it home with you), you can download a copy of the order of service and readings on to your phone or tablet before coming to church – please go to <https://www.richmondteamministry.org/orders-of-service-readings> and download it – don't forget to bring your device with you. Instead of the Offertory after the Peace, there will be a retiring collection and also the opportunity to give electronically. There are more subtle changes, but you will notice those when you are in church. The changes we have made are there for your safety and wellbeing. As before, we are unable to offer a crèche area or Junior Church for our young people. We would encourage parents to bring a book or soft toy for their own child, if that is helpful.

Morning Prayer, Monday – Thursday at 8.30am, from 11 January

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84749656504?pwd=YmE2OXhhUE53K0JHVnMrVG0rNDRzZz09>

Meeting ID: 847 4965 6504

Passcode: RTMJanuary

Glass Door

Guests are referred to the hostels by case workers or Glass Door partners. For more information about how this is done and to access help for someone you may be concerned about please visit Glass Door's website www.glassdoor.org.uk or call the hotline on 020 8016 6838 from 9.00am to 1.00pm. If you'd like to offer cooking support for the dinner service in Richmond at any point between now and April please let [Fr Neil](#) or [Rev'd Anne](#) know so that your contact details can be passed on to one of our coordinators. Donations of warm socks, gloves, hygiene products, tea, coffee, hot chocolate and sugar are also very welcome. Please visit www.glassdoor.org.uk/top-ten-ways-to-make-a-difference-this-christmas to find out how you can help the work of Glass Door this winter.

Give A Little

We are hugely grateful to so many who continue to make their weekly or monthly contribution to the finances of the Team, by standing order or direct debit. Contributions can also be made electronically in church and there will also be a plate for cash collections at the back of each church. However if anyone

would like to make an additional donation to the work of our churches this can be done at <https://givealittle.co/campaigns/5260a080-4ee0-49b6-a1c3-d552ef9a0700> Whilst this is a challenging time for many, financially as well as emotionally, I hope we can continue to count on your support for the work of our 3 churches.

Children and Youth activities:

Like so many things at the moment, all our activities for young people are currently on hold. But our young people are not forgotten. We daily pray for families, for those who normally attend our various groups.

Where to watch church services or access resources:

Throughout Christmastime to Candlemas, the Archdeacons of the Diocese of Southwark are providing filmed services here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SouthwarkDiocese> and online services (and links to previously streamed services) at Southwark Cathedral can be found at <https://cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/worship-and-music/worship/live-service-stream/>

The Church of England have a special page for you to light a virtual candle and make time to pray for yourself or for others which you can view here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/light-candle> and you can watch live-streamed services (or view previously streamed services) from the Church of England here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/church-online>

With best wishes,
Tina

Tina Roberts
Parish Administrator
Working remotely on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9.00am – 5.00pm
Mobile: 07521 299109
Working in the Office on Wednesdays, 9.00am – 5.00pm
Richmond Team Ministry
St Mary Magdalene • St Matthias • St John the Divine

Parish Office, The Vicarage, Ormond Road, Richmond TW10 6TH
020 8940 0362
www.richmondteamministry.org

Registered Charity No 1130018

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[Click here for St Mary Magdalene's Facebook page](#)



[Click here for the Team Rector's Twitter feed](#)