

Thursday 13 January 2022

Dear Friends,

While there is only one Feast Day of the Epiphany (6 January) marking the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, Epiphany is actually a season that extends over several weeks of the Church's calendar. The Gospel readings on Sundays lead us through a number of ways in which 'epiphany' – or 'manifestation' – happens. It begins with the Magi and their symbolic gifts, and continues with Jesus's baptism by John in the River Jordan; then the miracle at the wedding in Cana; next, when Jesus reads Isaiah's prophecy in the synagogue and identifies himself as its fulfilment; and finally in the Temple, where Jesus is presented to the Lord by Mary and Joseph (Candlemas).

I've always been particularly fascinated by the Magi. One take on the story is that it is a reaching back to an ancient narrative found in the book of Genesis, a curious tale of how God appeared to Abraham in the form of three mysterious men. Abraham receives the strangers and gives them hospitality, and they announce that his wife, Sarah, almost a hundred years old (!) will bear a son. Sarah, not surprisingly, laughs out loud at this, but the three visitors ask her if anything is too difficult for God and, nine months later, she gives birth to Isaac. It is possible Matthew may have had this story in mind when he wrote his Nativity narrative.

What brings these stories together? Well, it's partly that the strangers are known by what they bring – amazing news or gifts that point to the future. In the case of Abraham and Sarah, it is the future of Israel. For the holy family, gold, frankincense and myrrh point towards Jesus's adult ministry and his eventual death. In both narratives, the receiving of surprising news or gifts is an important key: God is made manifest in both. The paradox is that God is hidden and yet revealed; God is mystery and yet encountered; God may be seen on our own, yet is more fully discovered in the company of others; God is elusive, yet also the child next door, or the visitor who turns up unannounced; we do not know God at all, and yet we do. In God, says the poet, there is '*a deep but dazzling darkness*', a wonderful oxymoron that takes us to the heart of Epiphany, this season rich in symbols and layers of meaning.

In many ways, the Magi are our patrons, and we can be helped by their story. They know what it is like coming to Jesus by a roundabout route, with dead-ends, diversions and wrong turns along the way. Nor could they forget the long, hard journey they had made, during which they had grown older and probably yet more cynical about the world. But they came – albeit late (it's been suggested by scholars they may have arrived some eighteen months after Jesus's birth). They brought their enigmatic gifts, their complex pasts and their travellers' tales to Jesus. That was their epiphany moment, after which they continued their travels, but by another route, because journeying would never be the same again.

With prayers and blessings for your own journey in this holy season,

Anne, Charlie, Neil, and Wilma

This week the letter has been written by Revd Neil Summers

Please pray for:

...**Fr. Jamil Khadir and the Anglican congregations in Nablus** in the West Bank and the Anglican Church in Beirut; also for the peace of Jerusalem

...**Christ's School**, and for all schools in the Richmond Team

...**Glass Door staff** and for all volunteers, especially those who are working to provide hot soup and sandwiches

...**the sick and those in need** – Hermione Lockyer, Ron Bond, Madge Thorns, Joy Clarke, Pat Mygind, Veronica Huci, Penny and Michael Carleton-Smith, Megan Vaughan-Jones, Claire and Peter Day, Charles Stiller, Suzie and Mark Cox, Cedric Lee, Margaret Myatt, Fiona Bartlett

...**the departed, may they rest in peace**

The Richmond Team Ministry **email addresses** will be moving to a new server on Wednesday 26 January (our email addresses will remain the same). It is likely that there will be some interruption to our email service during this time. Therefore, if you send us an email at around this time and don't get a response (if a response is required) within 48 hours, please re-send your email. Thank you.

Church Services:

You are advised to wear a mask in church, unless you are exempt.

St John the Divine's Sunday service at 11.00am is both in-person and live-streamed via their [Facebook page](#).

St John's midweek service takes place on Tuesday evenings with half an hour of silent contemplation focused on the Blessed Sacrament at 6.30pm, followed by the Said Eucharist at 7.00pm.

St Mary Magdalene is holding in-person Sunday services at 8.00am, 9.30am, 11.30am (third Sunday only) and 6.30pm. The 9.30am service will also be live-streamed via their [Facebook page](#). During the week St Mary Magdalene is holding an in-person service at 10.00am on Wednesdays.

St Matthias' 9.30am Sunday service is both in-person and online via Zoom (please [contact Revd Anne Crawford](#) for log-in details). The midweek Eucharist at St Matthias is held on Thursdays at 10.00am.

Orders of service and readings can be found here <https://www.richmondteamministry.org/orders-of-service-readings>

Private Prayer:

St Mary Magdalene is open for private prayer on Saturdays between 10.00am and 12.00noon, when you can light a candle and reflect or meditate. The church is also open Monday – Friday, from 8.00am till 2.00pm.

St John the Divine is normally open on Tuesdays between 9.30am and 12.30pm, Saturday mornings between 10.00am-12.00noon, and at various other times when Fr Neil is working in the office.

Morning Prayer, Monday – Fridays, at 8.30am:

Morning Prayer takes place in church and on Zoom. We meet at St Mary Magdalene on Mondays, at St John the Divine on Tuesdays, at St Mary Magdalene on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and at St Matthias on Fridays.

On Zoom, Monday - Thursday:

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86999464069?pwd=QkFpVDBSZIN3ck5MSTIxR0FkSIQzZz09>

Meeting ID: 869 9946 4069

Passcode: RTMPrayer

and on Fridays:

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81983343470?pwd=ejVpVnB4d3VGdkFtWjl2c2tTOC9XUT09>

Meeting ID: 819 8334 3470

Passcode: FriPrayer

Evening Prayer takes place in person at St John the Divine on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 4.30pm.

On Sunday 30 January we will celebrate **Candlemas** with a Team Eucharist at St Mary Magdalene at 10.30am. Everyone is very welcome. Please note there will be no services at 9.30am at St Matthias or 11.00am at St John the Divine that Sunday.

Church, Community and other news:

UPDATE: From Parish Rooms to RTM Centre

Next **Sunday, 23 January** each church will receive an update on the work that has been happening on the architect's plans. In the afternoon you are invited to visit the Parish Rooms to have a look around and to

see the proposed plans in more detail. A leaflet with an update on the work the Working Group has done will also be available from that date.

Recitals at St Mary Magdalene

The next recital will be on Saturday 5 February, 12.30pm. We look forward to welcoming the pianist and composer Mateusz Rettner, who will bring a programme of music by Schubert and Messiaen.

Glass Door

Glass Door has taken the difficult decision not to open communal night shelters this winter. Unfortunately, despite all their best efforts over many months to provide a COVID-safe environment, staff and trustees felt the risks are too great. The transmissibility of the Omicron variant and the related changes to self-isolation rules were important factors in their decision.

However, our local volunteer team in Richmond is offering take-away soup and sandwiches (with fruit, cake and hot drinks) two days a week. It's obviously not a warm place to sleep, but it is warm food and human connection. The service runs from St John the Divine Church forecourt on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 5-6pm. If you are interested in being part of our baking and soup rota, please contact Sarah Percival: sarahpercival52@gmail.com and for volunteering and donations please contact Isabelle Swann: swannisabelle@hotmail.co.uk Many thanks.

A Message from Sue O'Toole:

I recently asked parishioners for help with the cost of an operation for the 16 year old nephew of Annet Gwokya, Head Teacher at Patience School, in Uganda. His name is Adrian Kitandwe. On Christmas Day 2021 he suffered a brain haemorrhage and collapsed. He was rushed to Lubaga Hospital in Kampala where he was placed in the intensive care unit and underwent a variety of tests and scans to determine the problem. His doctor diagnosed him with a right intracerebral brain haemorrhage. He recommended an operation to halt and rectify the bleed in his brain. Thanks to the loving and caring people here we have managed to send out £580 (nearly 3 million Ugandan Shillings). Adrian's family are very grateful for the help they have received with this very costly medical intervention. Adrian underwent corrective surgery on Tuesday. He remained in ICU overnight and is currently on the ward. I understand he will return to Lubaga Hospital over this weekend. At the time of writing this I have no information about the success of Adrian's operation but I will update everyone as soon as I have the information.

May I also express my sincere thanks to everyone for their love and kindness.

Please keep Adrian and his family in your prayers.

Sue O'Toole

Parish Giving Scheme / Give A Little

We are hugely grateful to so many who continue to make regular contributions to the finances of the Team.

Our planning, budgeting, and spending within RTM would be immensely helped by a new scheme that is being launched called the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS). This is a free Direct Debit scheme, enabling you to give safely and securely. We receive 100% of your donation plus Gift Aid is automatically claimed for us, which means reduced administration, less work for our Treasurer and Gift Aid Secretary and improved cash flow.

The PGS would replace other means of regular giving (standing orders, Give A Little, envelopes etc.). To find out more about PGS, please read the [donor leaflet](#) or speak to Jackie Harrison, our Stewardship Coordinator on 07747 111525 or email jackieharrison456@gmail.com. You can also watch [this video](#) to see how PGS works. You can sign up [online](#), by telephone or [by post](#). When you sign up, please do opt in to Gift Aid if you are a UK taxpayer.

As in the past, 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 on-line 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 three churches.

Please feel free to contact Jackie Harrison, our Stewardship Coordinator, on 07747 111525 or jackieharrison456@gmail.com if you have any questions.

With best wishes,
Tina

Tina Roberts
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Richmond Team Ministry
St Mary Magdalene • St Matthias • St John the Divine
www.richmondteamministry.org

Registered Charity No 1130018

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