

Prayers for the Month of January



5th January

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi 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.

19th January

Eternal Lord,
our beginning and our end:
bring us with the whole creation
to your glory, hidden through past ages
and made known
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

12th January

Heavenly Father,
at the Jordan
you revealed Jesus as your Son:
may we recognise him as our Lord
and know ourselves
to be your beloved children;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

26th January

God of all mercy,
your Son proclaimed
good news to the poor,
release to the captives,
and freedom to the oppressed:
anoint us with your Holy Spirit
and set all your people free
to praise you in Christ our Lord.

from their homeland. It's one thing to curiously study the night sky, quite another to bother to follow a strange object within it. *Something* about that star gripped their attention. They arrive in Jerusalem, and this long-awaited king is not there! They arrive in the most humble of villages and find that here He is: the one who moved the planets to align with each other and create the very light they've followed. He's now lying in an animal's feeding trough! As they marvel at this unexpected scene, all the magi can do is worship at the feet of a toddler (what did *that* look like?). They'd never forget this scene and their lives would be changed for ever.

Like the Magi, we're all on a journey of faith. At what stage is yours? Are you still 'tracking the night sky of your faith', excited and curious as to what God might show you next about Himself, about you, about His calling upon your life? Are you asking God questions about where you can find a deeper sense of Jesus in your life? Are you, digging deeper into His Word - the very place where we discover Him, and about how He calls each of us to live with the hope He's given? What could this story of the Magi be saying about your relationship with God at the start of this new year?

'THE BULLETIN'



St Paul's Church

Part of the Great Baddow Team Ministry

Our vision: 'To love Christ and make His love known.'

A warm welcome to St Paul's
and we hope you enjoy your time with us.
After the service, do stay around and meet our church members.

Sunday Services for January

Sunday 5th January:

The Epiphany

10.00am Holy Communion
with *Children's Groups*

Preacher: *Phil Shel Drake*

Readings: *Ephesians 3.1-12*
& *Matthew 2.1-12*

Sunday 19th January:

The Second Sunday of Epiphany

10.00am All Age Holy Communion

Preacher: *Phil Shel Drake*

Reading: *John 1.29-42*

Sunday 12th January:

The First Sunday of Epiphany

10.30am Morning Worship

Preacher: *Abigail Shel Drake*

Readings: *Isaiah 42.1-9*
& *Matthew 3.13-17*

Sunday 26th January:

The Third Sunday of Epiphany

10.00am Morning Worship

Preacher: *Chris Binstead*

Readings: *Isaiah 9.1-4*
& *Matthew 4.12-23*



'Vicar's Thoughts' for January

'Happy New Year!' 'Happy new decade!' What an opportunity to begin afresh with God, to travel deeper with Him, to be curious about Him, and not simply hold onto gospel stories we're all so familiar with. Our first Sunday of the year is marked by the season of Epiphany - a season of awe and wonder, as we reflect upon the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem. But boy, is it a story that has been drummed into us by the over-familiarity and exposure to all those nativity plays and Christmas cards! There's so much we actually don't know about this particular story, but a little digging does take us slightly deeper into what it might actually have looked like for Mary, Joseph and Jesus, on that first Christmas when strangely dressed men from the East turned up to visit.

These travellers arrive to find the child king in a tiny one or two roomed house in a backwater village of Judea. Remember, the New Testament was written in Koine Greek, the common language of most people in that region at that time. In Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus, we tend to translate the place Mary gave birth in, as an 'inn', but the Greek word *kataluma* better translates as a 'guest room' within a house. Because there were people staying in the guest room already, Jewish custom would not have turfed out the other guests inhospitably, but something had to be done to accommodate this pregnant lady! Did Joseph know the people who owned the house? Perhaps this house belonged to one of his relatives...after all, he hailed from Bethlehem. That's why they'd travelled there to pay Emperor Augustus' census.

So, it would seem that Mary and Joseph were 'upgraded' into the house owner's living quarters. Indeed, it wasn't unusual for animals to be kept at night in the main part of a person's house, so this might account for how Jesus was 'laid in a manger': it having been pragmatically placed there for the animals! And so when these Magi turn up, Matthew now refers to Jesus as 'the child'. So, unlike how the Christmas cards depict it, we're not really talking about a baby here, we're talking about a toddler - a toddler king! We've moved on a couple of years, which is why Herod gives his hideous death order regarding all children two and under. And so by now, the holy family would have probably settled in quite nicely into the house owner's place. (I'd argue that they actually *were* staying with relatives).

Anyway, you may or not find the background to these events interesting, but I wonder - as we enter the season of Epiphany - what of the person of Jesus is drawing you closer to Him? The Magi's curiosity took them a long, long way

(Please turn over)

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[Phil's day off is Thursday]

St Paul's email: contact Phil direct or via our website

Web Page: www.stpaulsgreatbaddow.org

Social Media: facebook.com/stpaulsgreatbaddow

Noticeboard:

'Wellspring': will not meet in January, due to Phil Ritchie's Licensing Service in Colchester.

Our Next PCC Meeting: 13th January, 7.45pm for an 8pm start at St Paul's.

Next 'Messy Church': Saturday 18th January, 10.30-12.30pm. Fancy giving it a try as a 'Messy Church' helper? Speak to Phil, Louise or Vicki. We're always looking for new volunteers once a month.

'Last Orders': Mens' Fellowship: Next meeting on Monday January 27th, from 9pm at *The Running Mare*.

Our Parish Prayer Focus for January: Please pray that God will direct us to move in the power of His Spirit within our church and outside its walls. And pray for families & friends on: *Apple Way* and *Avenue Road*.