

The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

January is traditionally the time for looking forward and looking back. This year may feel a little different as many of us would prefer to look forward and forget the year that was 2020! Having said that there have also been joys and important events that it would be wrong to forget. People have celebrated important anniversaries and birthdays. We have lost loved ones and children have been born. Many of these events have been different as we have had to celebrate and mourn in relative isolation but hopefully it will make us more grateful when we can celebrate together again.

The new Year has given us new hope of lives back to normal and hopefully soon we will feel the joy of human touch again.

It is basic to Christians to look back and forward in our lives and in the story of our faith. It's good, although not necessarily easy, to look back over the day of the week or the year and to think about what has happened in our lives. By doing so we find things for which to say 'Thank you' and things for which to say 'sorry', both to God and to other people. Perhaps we see where God has been at work in our lives or recognise unexpected answers to our prayers. Perhaps, looking back, we can see that God's love, the reality of his love, was there even in the bleakest times. Seeing the past in a new light can give us hope for the future.

And what a hope we have: the sort of hope that led the wise men to Bethlehem to search for the baby Jesus, to worship him and to give him their gifts.

In this new year, let's bring him our worship and ourselves. Let's take the risk that in our encounters with the risen Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be changed and go home 'by another way.'

May we know the peace and joy of the love of Christ this year and always.

Andrew

CHRISTMAS CRAFT STALL

A big thank you to everyone who supported the Christmas Craft stall over the first two weeks in December. We raised **£386.21** for church funds. Thank you to everyone who worked from home making things for the stall, especially Wendy (cracker making) and Rona (mini mugs). Hopefully we will be back in craft group next year, vaccine permitting!

CHURCH CHRISTMAS TREE

Once again this year Compton Acres have kindly donated the Christmas tree for church. We are very grateful for their support.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Perhaps this was a question the Wise Men asked after seeing the infant Jesus. They had come from a distant land to Jerusalem. They had followed a star and expected to see a royal child. Now in Bethlehem, they saw things differently. No doubt, Mary and Joseph shared with these men their recent experiences and knew God was with them. Now the Magi had to have eyes of faith to recognise that this child was God in the flesh.

On 6th January many churches will celebrate Epiphany. On this day we remember the Eastern Men bringing their gifts to Jesus. The word 'epiphany' describes their 'revelation' or 'insight' that this was no ordinary baby. Who could they tell? Not King Herod. They had a dream warning them to return home a different way.

Their return to familiar surroundings was going to be different. They couldn't be silent about what they had experienced. Their lives were now changed. On returning home they faced new circumstances and challenges.

Doesn't this sound a bit familiar to us today? The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all of us in one way or another. Where do we go from here? We have celebrated our Lord's birth, but now we are returning to our previous activities. The festive break is over, and we are returning to changed, very difficult circumstances.

We go into a New Year that is so different from this time last year. While we might be downcast with all the upsets around us, there is one thing that has not changed.

It is almighty God! He is our rock. We can look to Him in this world of confusion and uncertainty. Perhaps, from now on, we shall be worshipping and serving Him in different ways. So, with the challenges that lie ahead, let's continually seek His guidance.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding....and He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Lester Amann

The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

You may have had several years of intensive training on biblical interpretation, preaching and church history, but that doesn't cover the really important matters in parish life: how to evade disgruntled parishioners, run a brisk Summer Fete and, in your case at present, deal with correspondence, either by letter or email.



My regular practice, which I recommend to you as a New Year Resolution, is to read all the letters/emails you receive and then discard them. If the matter is truly important, you will receive a second message, to which you respond; more likely, the sender will either have forgotten all about his first letter/email after the second month or will write to some other cleric instead. In either case, you will be saved a great deal of trouble.

You only need two folders for your filing system, either for post or emails. The first is for complaints; they are to be filed and ignored, no matter how many duplicates you are sent. Should you be confronted personally, you simply say that the matter has been passed on to the bishop. Those truly dogged complainants who pursue the matter will eventually receive an episcopal reply saying he knows nothing of the matter, for which you then blame the postal system/spammed email. After letters and emails have ricocheted round the country for many months, the person complaining will either have lost energy to pursue the matter, or the will to live.

The second file receives all other correspondence/emails chronologically. The earliest letters and emails will be at the bottom of the pile and the most recent on the top. In my experience, the postal file only needs attention when it reaches a height of about two feet and becomes unstable. The practice then is to discard the lower six inches and allow it to continue its steady growth. If the stack is kept in the church vestry, then mice usually attend to the papers on the bottom of the pile.

Sadly, your own church, with its electronic systems for filing, sorting and retrieving correspondence and with your parish secretaries, removes all of these blessings at a stroke. You have therefore no excuses for not dealing instantly with every note that comes your way. As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

May I also remind you that not even St Paul, that unflagging letter-writer, ever ended one of his letters with a request for a prompt reply. Need I say more?

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

ST. PAUL, THE FIRST CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL

This month, on 25th January, the Church celebrates probably the most famous conversion of all. At least, what happened to a young man called Saul on the road to Damascus has become a byword for all instant conversions – what is known as a ‘damascene’ moment. Saul was a devout Jew, a Pharisee, a student of Gamaliel and a fierce critic of the followers of Jesus, then a very new sect on the religious scene.

On his way to Damascus to start a purge of Christians in that city, he was blinded by a bright light and heard a voice saying, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ He asked the identity of the voice, and was told: ‘Jesus, whom you are persecuting’. Stunned by the experience, he followed further instructions which led him to a Christian man in Damascus, who prayed with him. As he did, Saul’s sight was restored.

The experience convinced Paul that Jesus – crucified in Jerusalem four or five years earlier – was in fact the Messiah and had risen from the dead. After a period of instruction, Saul was baptised and took the name Paul. At first, some Christians were wary about the reality of his conversion, but over a period of time he was accepted and indeed eventually recognised as an ‘apostle’, a ‘special messenger’ of Jesus Christ.

His intellectual stature and leadership gifts quickly marked him out, and within a few years he became a leading figure in the emerging Christian Church, preaching and founding churches all over the Middle East, largely of Gentile

converts. He was eventually martyred in Rome, probably in 65AD.

Paul was the first intellectual of the Christian Church, the man who was able to set the events of the life and teaching of Jesus, and especially His death and resurrection, into a coherent theology, with its roots very clearly in the Jewish faith of his own upbringing.

Many people think of Paul as a rather negative, narrow misogynist, but even a quick reading of his letters actually reveals a person of great warmth, who evoked enormous affection and devotion from others. 'You would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me!' he writes to the Christians at Galatia. As for the charge that Paul disliked women, even a quick read of his letters will reveal how large a role women played in his churches. In terms of the first century, St Paul was a dangerous liberal! So, all in all, the amazing Paul of Tarsus deserves a bit of celebrating on 25th January.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE

Salisbury Cathedral entrance charges -

The national lockdown imposed at the end of March, with restrictions lifted only in June and July, led to Salisbury Cathedral (in common with all churches) suffering a huge loss of income.

The cathedral's loss is estimated at £2 million for the year, while daily running costs remain at about £14,000. The Cathedral Recovery Appeal was launched in the summer and the response has been good.

However, to boost the recovery, the Cathedral Chapter decided that from 1st September visitors would be charged £8 for entry to the cathedral.

Those attending worship or wishing to pray will not pay and other groups are exempt: cathedral staff and volunteers, members of the congregation, Salisbury residents, Salisbury Diocesan parishioners, members of the Friends of Salisbury Cathedral and the under-13s.

There is a student rate of £5 for 13- 18-year-olds.

The ticket purchased by visitors will be valid for 12 months for return visits.

- The Friends of Salisbury Cathedral have paid for live streaming equipment to enable cathedral services to be viewed as they happen by those unable to attend in person.

Salisbury Cathedral exhibition -

A collection of treasures that tell the story of Salisbury Cathedral's move from Old Sarum to its present site has been put on display.

The exhibition in the cathedral's north transept, entitled The Cathedral that Moved, is part of a programme of events to mark the 800th anniversary of the move.

The artefacts, from the library and archive, include the papal bull permitting the cathedral to move from Old Sarum, a 19-foot list of all the food eaten by the canon treasurer in the year 1256-57, and a book from the scriptorium at Old Sarum written in the early 1100s, making it older than the cathedral itself.

The papal bull - or letter - sent by Pope Honorius III, is bound into the Register of St Osmund, which contains documents from the cathedral's earliest history, including the 1091 foundation charter for the first cathedral at Old Sarum and a description of the laying of the present cathedral's foundation stones on 28th April 1220.

The exhibition, curated by cathedral archivist Emily Naish, includes two information boards and a four-minute animated film by Bournemouth University students. Also on show is an 'Indulgence' issued by Archbishop Stephen Langton around the time building began on the present site.

It grants forgiveness for 30 days of sin to anyone who contributes towards the cost of construction. The exhibition runs until spring 2021.

Salisbury Cathedral installs solar panels -

More than 90 solar panels have been installed on Salisbury Cathedral's south cloister roof and are already pumping electricity into the building.

The 93 panels, covering 150 square metres, cannot be seen from the ground, but will be visible to those on tower tours. It is estimated that they will produce more than 30,000kw hours each year, the equivalent of the usage of eight British households.

The project is part of the cathedral's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Bishop of Salisbury the Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam said: "The Church of England is working hard towards a net zero carbon footprint by 2030.

"As the Church of England's lead bishop for the environment I am delighted that Salisbury Cathedral is making a contribution that takes us towards this."

Other green initiatives include draught-proofing the building, moving to green tariff energy and installing LED lighting.

A display panel in the cathedral shop shows how much electricity the solar panels are producing.



CALENDAR FOR **JANUARY**

EPIPHANY

Sun	3	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Parish Communion
Wed	6	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

EPIPHANY 1

Sun	10	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Matins
Wed	13	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

EPIPHANY 2

Sun	17	8.00 am 9.30 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Family Service Parish Communion
Wed	20	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

EPIPHANY 3

Sun	24	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Matins
Wed	27	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

CANDLEMAS

Sun	31	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Parish Communion
		6.00 pm	Service for Candlemas

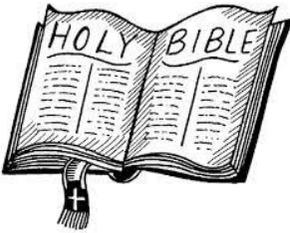
HOPE IF YOU HATE HOUSEWORK!

If you spend half an hour a day tidying the house, going up and down your stairs, and doing household chores, you are reducing the risk of an early death.

So says recent guidance from the World Health Organisation, as it urges people to maintain regular moderate exercise on a daily basis, of up to at least 150 minutes a week. It also recommends vigorous exercise of at least 75 minutes a week.

The WHO recommendation was published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, and is part of the new global guidelines on physical activity.

WHO also warned that those who stay sedentary for 10 or more hours on a regular basis will have a "significantly heightened risk of death."



SUNDAY READINGS **IN JANUARY**

Sunday 3rd January - Epiphany

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 60.1-6

Isaiah speaks of a glorious day when people will come to the Lord from far and wide, bringing their gifts and their worship.

NEW TESTAMENT: Ephesians 3.1-12

Paul reveals that the riches of Christ are for Gentiles as well as Jews.

GOSPEL: Matthew 2.1-12

In the days of Herod, Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Wise men come enquiring about the King of the Jews. Herod is worried.

Sunday 10th January - Epiphany 1

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 1. 1-5

The creation of the world.

NEW TESTAMENT: Mark 1. 4-11

John the Baptist baptises Jesus in the Jordan. As Jesus comes out of the water, he is acclaimed as the Son of God.

Sunday 17th January - Epiphany 2

OLD TESTAMENT: 1 Samuel 3.1-10

God reveals himself to Samuel through the medium of a dream and its interpretation by Eli.

NEW TESTAMENT: Revelation 5. 1-10

John describes the one seated on the throne in his vision and at the end the worship of an animal, a lamb, as God.

GOSPEL: John 1.43-end

Jesus calls his first group of disciples and it is clear that these men are instantly aware of Jesus' identity from their first moment of contact with him.

Sunday 24th January - Epiphany 3

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 14.17-20

Abram rescues his relative Lot and meets with Melchizedek, King of Salem, who blesses him.

NEW TESTAMENT: John 2.1-11

The wedding feast at Cana where Jesus changes water to wine.

Sunday 31st January - Candlemas

OLD TESTAMENT: Malachi 3.1-5

Malachi establishes the imminence of God's coming, an event which no man will be able to resist. His message is one of tense expectation.

NEW TESTAMENT: Hebrews 2.14-end

Christ has become like we are in order to help us in our sufferings.

GOSPEL: Luke 2.22-40

Jesus' unique identity and importance are confirmed by the testimony of Simeon and Anna.

The 39 Articles – Continued

Without any further ado, we plunge into Articles 3-7, continuing on where we left off in the December issue.

III. OF THE GOING DOWN OF CHRIST INTO HELL

AS Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed, that he went down into Hell.

Articles III & IV both continue the theme of the second article; Christology, the study of the nature of Christ. Article III touches on a number of things familiar from the creeds that we say together at Church; firstly Christ's death and burial, which are fairly uncontroversial, then the belief that he descended to Hell as part of the work he did on the Cross. Despite being one of the shortest articles, Article III has long been one of the most controversial. 'Hell' can mean a number of different places depending on your theological tradition. In Hebrew thought, "*sheol*" which is often translated as Hell in English Bibles, is more like the Greek *hades* – a realm of the dead, but without any particular association with punishment. However, a place of punishment – *Gehenna* – is also translated as Hell, and is associated with the sort of fire, gnashing of teeth and punishment that Jesus alluded to in a number of parables. However it is meant to be taken, the idea behind Jesus' descent into hell is that he suffered the same death that we are subject to, with the same perils, and conquered it; our Hope in Christ isn't just a hope in this life, but the knowledge that God has gone before us, has broken the power of hell and death, and has been truly dead, and truly raised into glorious new life. Which brings us to...

IV. OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

CHRIST did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man's nature; wherewith he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all Men at the last day.

Our hope as Christians rests on this fact; as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:14-16 *if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.* Here lies our hope, and if we are wrong about this, we are preaching false good news. But the story in Article IV doesn't end there; we are not just living in the glory of a past event, but we are looking forward to a future of judgement, where true justice will be done. This is a particularly important thing to remember at Advent, where we almost exist in two timelines; we commemorate the first coming of Christ as we prepare ourselves for the second, where our deeds will be weighed. But for those who have been washed in the blood of Christ, who have called him 'Lord', this will be a joyful moment, as the plan of God is concluded, and a new creation is fashioned, free from sin and death.

V. OF THE HOLY GHOST

THE Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

Article V completes the first section of the articles, which deal with the nature and work of God, by reminding us that the Holy Spirit is also God, having the same '*substance, majesty, and glory*'. Of note to some historical nerds is the reference to the spirit 'proceeding from the Father and the Son' the infamous *fileoque* clause, which precipitated the east-west split in the Catholic church which continues to this day. I will leave those who are interested to look it up, as it's too big a topic for this short commentary!

Sometimes it can feel that the spirit is the poorer sibling of the trinity; it's easy enough to grasp what the Father does, in creation and in begetting the Son, and what the Son does, in his incarnation and his crucifixion but this article reminds us that the Spirit is just as much God, not just a 'force', or how God 'works' in the world; we can, and do, have a personal relationship with the Spirit. Adam Young, writing for the churchman magazine, suggests that '*All of this radically points away from an emotionless force or mere expression of divine will and towards a personable person, a relatable revelation, and an emotional emissary. This is someone you can have a very real relationship with—one which is just as rich, active, and varied as the relationships we have with the Father and the Son.*'

To be continued...

The Rev'd Tom Pelham

HOW MANY MORE WAVES?

As the days are dark, and winter still stretches ahead, many of us find the prospect of more restrictions for months to come even harder than when we first went into lockdown.

After nine months of coronavirus, we are emotionally drained. We are financially drained. We are lonely, depressed, frightened, and facing deep uncertainty, from job losses to health problems to relationship breakdown. We are running out of steam, and the virus is still going strong.

There is a strong parallel in all this with the ancient book of Job and his experience of loss and pain. Like Job, we are discovering that we are not always entitled to health, wealth, and happiness; and like Job our suffering inexplicably goes on and on. Like the irritating moralising of Job's comforters, the constant critique of the media only seems to make things worse. And, like Job, our minds are incapable of totally grasping the meaning of all this suffering. We need hope.

Job was deprived of everything, yet even in his despair he never lost his belief that God was there. Occasionally an indestructible hope burst forth like a ray of light in the darkness of his pain. "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God." (Job 19:26).

But the truly transformative moment for Job came when, instead of seeing his situation in front of God, he finally *saw God in front of his situation*. Then, even in the intensity of his suffering, the greatness of the Almighty eclipsed the problem. That is the revelation we need.

In this sad and weary time lament is therapeutic, and we can be completely real with our Father in Heaven. Yet in our lament, the path to rekindling true hope lies in the possibility of focusing on the character and immensity of God. Greater is He that is in us than the pandemic that is in the world.

Join in with the ancient words of Psalm 42: 'Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Saviour and my God.'

Paul Valler, Chair of the LICC Board (London Institute for Contemporary Christianity.)

SPEEDING!

It was 125 years ago, on 28th January 1896, that Walter Arnold of Kent became the first person in the world to be convicted of speeding. The speed limit was 2mph at the time, and a man carrying a red flag had to walk in front of the vehicle. But one day Mr Arnold took off at 8mph, without a flag bearer. He was chased by a policeman on a bicycle for five miles, arrested, and fined one shilling.

Mr Arnold was four times over the rather modest 2mph limit in the streets of Paddock Wood, near Tunbridge Wells in Kent. To achieve this feat today, a driver in most towns or cities would have to be travelling at over 100mph, which is probably a bit excessive.

The speed limit was changed later that same year to 14mph, but there is no record of Mr Arnold getting his money back. Nor is there any evidence that he was endangering life and limb, which used to be the criterion: the 1832 Stage Carriage Act introduced the offence of endangering someone's safety by "furious driving".

Just over 100 years later, the road safety charity Brake reports that male motorists are more than three times as likely as women to having driven at more than 100mph, because 'boy racers' believe they have more talent than the average driver. Police have caught one driver doing 120mph in a 20mph zone, another doing 152mph in a 30mph zone, and one doing an astonishing 180mph on a motorway. As Edmund King, AA president, points out: "Generally men have riskier attitudes towards driving than their female counterparts." (*Tim Lenton*)

As a New Year begins

A prayer by Karl Barth (1886 – 1968). This most prominent Protestant theologian of his time spent much of his life resisting the Nazi movement, and so knew a thing or two about entering a New Year undaunted by troubles all around him.

O Lord, our Father! At the turn of the year... our hearts are filled with sombre thoughts... our ears are deafened by the voices of the radio and the newspapers, with their numerous predictions for the coming year. Instead we want to hear Your word, Your voice, Your assurance, Your guidance. We know that You are in our midst, and are eager to give us all that we need, whether we ask or not.

...We ask for one thing only: that you collect our scattered thoughts, getting rid of the confused and defiant thoughts that may distract us, and thus enable us to concentrate on your limitless generosity to us. You were abundantly generous to us last year, and will be no less generous to us next year, and in every year to come. Fill us with gratitude to you.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

12th December Alfred John Pelham (Freddie) (8lbs 6ozs)

Funeral

22nd December Frederick (Freddie) Ernest Couzens (97)

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sunday 10 th January	Michael Wright
Sunday 17 th January	Michael Wright
Sunday 24 th January	Wendy Bales
Sunday 31 st January	Wendy Bales



MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the February issue of the
Church Magazine is
Friday 22nd January