



WELCOME TO ST PETER'S ASH



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT ST PETER'S IS CALLED TO CELEBRATE, LIVE AND REFLECT THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

27th DECEMBER 2020

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

<u>READINGS FOR TODAY</u>	PARISH OFFICE: Please phone or use e-mail to make contact TEL:01252 331161: e- mail: office@saint-peters-ash.org.uk BOOKINGS OF WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS – phone for an appointment on 01252 321517 or 331161 WEBSITE: www.saint-peters-ash.org.uk
Exodus 33 v 7 – 11a 1 John 1 John 21 v 19b - end	

FATHER KEITH AND CAROL WISH YOU ALL EVERY BLESSING FOR CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPIER AND HEALTHIER NEW YEAR!

READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK – EPIPHANY

Isaiah 60 v 1 – 6; Ephesians 3 v 1 – 12; Matthew 2 v 1 - 12

ST PETER'S PRAYER CHAIN - If you would like prayer for yourself or somebody else please phone: 01252 322292 or 01252 323037 This is a confidential service.

CARE AND SHARE - If you would like to donate any tins, packets, UHT milk, tea, coffee etc. for the shelves outside church, please leave items on the doorstep of the Rectory.

ST PETER'S CHURCH CALENDARS

Ideal presents, our calendar for 2021 has pictures of St Peter's and room for appointments. Only £5 - now available – at the back of church.

MOTHER'S UNION - Wishing all our members a very happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas. Looking forward to restarting our meetings as soon as we are able to meet again safely. Barbara Ridley

Please pray for the souls of all the recently Departed, among them: ELIZABETH STOKES (Liz's mother); PETER ROBERTS

Brighter Visions

A thought for Christmas 2020 from Bishop Andrew

Friends, as we approach a Christmas like no other, a line from a familiar Christmas carol has come to mind: not 'In the bleak midwinter', though it may have sometimes felt like that in our gloomier moments. Not 'O tidings of comfort and joy', though that's been the inspired choice of the archbishops this year. But the phrase, 'Brighter visions beam afar'.

From the beginning of the millennium, you see, this year - 2020 - has been associated with visions. Taking its cue from the world of the opticians, and deploying

a rather obvious pun, every self-respecting business, school, hospital and church has had its 2020 Vision Statement, planning and preparing for this very moment, as 2020 draws to a close.

And such planning and preparations are important, of course, if our lives are to be fruitful and purposeful; and 2020 Vision Statements have their place. But what the *real* 2020 has reminded us is that even if our human vision might be proclaimed as faultless – 20/20 – when we next pay a visit to the opticians; there's something we need that goes way beyond that: the ability, in the words of the apostle Paul, to walk by faith, not by sight:

'Sages, leave your contemplations, 'Brighter visions beam afar'.

The first Christmas, after all – like the first Good Friday – like the first Easter Day – was entirely unforeseen. No manmade vision statements could have come up with the idea that the world's salvation would hang on the life of a tiny baby lying in a cattle shed, or an alleged blasphemer nailed to a cross, or an empty tomb and reports of a man risen from the dead. Only the divine vision of the prophets got anywhere the true story, and they ended up being ridiculed or thrown down wells for put in the stocks for their pains. As the first Christians went around proclaiming this message, they too were seen as fools, 'fools for Christ', as Paul again put it. But then he added, 'God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength'.

And as I reflect back on this past year, and as I look forward to Christmas, my original 2020 vision statement – which, speaking personally, involved a sabbatical, and writing a book on Discipleship, and fostering the first tentative signs of church growth across the diocese in the 2019 statistics, may lie in tatters; but perhaps that's a lesson in true discipleship itself. For following Jesus involves brighter visions than these, as together we choose to leave our human contemplations and 'Come and worship Christ, the newborn king'.

May God bless you and yours this Christmastime!

+Andrew, December 2020

Morning Prayer at 10 am on Sunday Feast of St John the Evangelist

If there is more than one person present, someone may wish to read the parts marked (L), everyone says the rest together. You can say alternate verses in the Psalm and in the Canticles. Please have a Bible to hand.

(L) O Lord, open our lips
All: and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

(L) You laid the foundation of the earth
All: and the heavens are the work of your hands.

A candle is lit

(L) Blessed are you, sovereign God,
creator of heaven and earth,
to you be praise and glory for ever.
As your living Word, eternal in heaven,
assumed the frailty of our mortal flesh,
may the light of your love be born in us
to fill our hearts with joy as we sing:
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
All: Blessed be God for ever.

This hymn is said or sung:

A great and mighty wonder,
A full and holy cure!
The virgin bears the Infant
With virgin honour pure!
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!

The Word becomes incarnate
And yet remains on high,
And cherubim sing anthems
To shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!

While thus they sing your monarch,
Those bright angelic bands,
Rejoice, ye vales and mountains!
Ye oceans, clap your hands!
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!

Since all He comes to ransom,
By all be He adored,
The Infant born in Beth'lem,
The Saviour and the Lord!
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!

(L) The night has passed, and the day lies open before
us; let us pray with one heart and mind:

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

(L) Hear what Saint John says:
If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just,
and will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us
from all unrighteousness.

We keep a moment of silence as we call to mind our sins:

(L) Lord Jesus, you are the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

(L) Lord Jesus, you came not to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved.
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

(L) Lord Jesus, you are the Saviour of the world.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

(L): May God who loved the world so much
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour
forgive us our sins
and make us holy to serve him in the world,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

We now say The Gloria together:

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

The collect for today St John the Evangelist:

Merciful Lord,
cast your bright beams of light upon the Church:
that, being enlightened by the teaching of your
blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John,
we may so walk in the light of your truth
that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ your incarnate Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read 1 John 1 followed by Psalm 117 concluding with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as
it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

(L) Alleluia, alleluia.
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory.

All: Alleluia.

Now read John 21 v 19b - end

Here are some thoughts on today's readings from Fr Keith:

I like St John the Evangelist! That may seem a strange way to begin this reflection, but it's true. John is different from the other Gospel writers. Of course, all four evangelists tell the same story of our salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. But whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke have quite a lot of sayings and stories in common, John has a different style and way of presenting Jesus to the world. From the first verse of chapter 1 of his gospel, with his use of the term 'The Word' to describe Jesus, to the last verse, where he writes that there is much more that could be said about Jesus – John treads a parallel but separate road to the others.

Today is not the day for an in depth analysis of those differences. Many books have been written by scholars about John's writings and his theological perspective. But this morning I'd just like to share a few thoughts about his words that have spoken to me over the years, and made a profound impact on how I look at Jesus. You will all have your own views on John – some people find him difficult, others see him as the key that unlocks much more understanding of Jesus than any of the other New Testament writers.

To me the first chapter of John's gospel is the key to all of my understanding of Jesus. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' John pulls no punches, at the outset of his writings he makes it clear that Jesus isn't just a good man, a prophet or a messenger from God, but actually God Himself, become human just like us – 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory'. There is no ambiguity here, God is not a God who is 'up there' remote and not fully understanding our human condition. Henceforth we know that he has experienced for Himself all that it means to be human, and therefore fully appreciates all of our joys and sorrows. We worship a God whose very nature has been revealed in a way that not even the prophets of old had expected.

The rest of John's gospel continues to reveal more about what this tells us about the kind of relationship God wants to have with us – a more personal and intimate relationship than people in the past had dared to imagine. John writes of a Jesus who turns water into wine at a wedding feast so that the celebrations can go on, when all seemed headed for disaster. Moreover, what he provides is the very best. Later John lets us see Jesus down on his knees washing his disciples' feet, in the manner of a servant. Here is the One through whom all things in the universe came into being, yet giving an example of humble service to others which he expects his disciples to replicate. A very different picture of God from what has gone before.

From the cross, in John's gospel, Jesus in his agony, still shows compassion for his mother and entrusts her into John's care. On Easter Day Jesus reveals himself to Mary Magdalene gently, by calling her by name. Although he had foretold his resurrection and his friends had failed to believe Him, Jesus doesn't get angry with them, but comes to them again in love and compassion. That same love is shown to Thomas when he doubts the words of the others about having seen Jesus alive again. He forgives Peter for his three denials, and gently tells him not to worry about matters

that don't concern him – like the fate of the beloved disciple. Peter's job was simply to follow Jesus on the path set out for him.

The manner and character of God as shown in all the writings of St John can be summed up in the verse from his first letter that is used at the start of the wedding service – 'God is love, and those who live in love, live in God, and God lives in them' (1 John 4 v 16). Also, in the verse from the gospel, which I had to learn by rote in Sunday school: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life' John 3 v 16. God's life affirming love is the inspiration for St John and the key message that we, as Jesus' followers, are called to proclaim.

John is also clear about the purpose of God's intervention into the world to repair the damage of sin. Again, in his first letter, from the passage we heard this morning we find this: 'if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us'. (1 John 1 v 9 – 10).

So, John's writings for me point me to the depths of God's love for me and all humanity. They speak of God's gentleness and concern, but also of God's justice and his desire for honesty and truth from us, if we are to have a proper relationship with him through Jesus. John emphasises Jesus' desire that we should all inherit eternal life – but our repentance is a prerequisite for that of course. John also uses the imagery of Jesus being the light in the darkness of this world, the light that no darkness can overcome. At this time when so many people are feeling the threat of the darkness of disease and disruption in their lives, perhaps more than ever we all need to read and re-read the positive message that John's writings bring to us.

So, on this feast of St John, let us give thanks for the good news that he tells us of in his own special way. Alongside Matthew, Mark and Luke, John gives us even more insights into Jesus, and the Father who sent his Son that that we might have life, and have it abundantly, both now and into eternity. Amen.

Now pause for your own reflections.

This Carol may be said or sung:

Joy to The world! the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns
Let us our songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat repeat the sounding joy

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders. and wonders of His love

(L): We now affirm our faith in the words of the Creed:

All I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

(L) This is the message we have heard,
All: the message we proclaim:

(L) that God is light.
All: In him there is no darkness at all.

(L) If we walk in the light
All: as he is in the light,

(L) we have fellowship with one another,
All: and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us
from all sin.

We now say 'The Benedictus' together:

All: To us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,
and all the heavenly hosts now sing,
Glory to God in the highest.

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, ♦
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, ♦
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old ♦
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors, ♦
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear, ♦
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the
Most High, ♦
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation ♦
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God ♦
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
shadow of death, ♦
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All: To us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,
and all the heavenly hosts now sing,
Glory to God in the highest.

*Now we turn to God in a time of prayer, adapted from
Common Worship by Fr Keith:*

Rejoicing in the love and life of God made visible among
us, let us pray to Jesus, the only-begotten Son.

Bread of life, your beloved disciple John has brought us
your living word, inspire all evangelists and teachers to
build up your Church. Bless our Bishops Andrew and Jo
and all the clergy and lay ministers of our diocese.

Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer*

Light of the world,
illuminate the dark places of this world,
where sin, violence and death cast their shadow over
human lives. Protect those caught up in wars and places
of unrest. Come to comfort those suffering as the result
of natural disasters, and bless the work of all aid
agencies.

Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer*
Door of the sheepfold,
protect all who are in trouble or danger,
and give grace to our loved ones, families and friends,
especially those suffering because of the pandemic,
those who are ill and those who are isolated and afraid.

Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer*

Way, truth and life,
minister to all who are lost, misguided or without faith;
bind up the broken, and give rest to the weary. Give fresh
hope to those who see no bright future, and strengthen
those who are supporting people with mental health
issues.

Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer*

Resurrection and the life,
raise us up at the last day
with all who have gone before us in faith,
with those whom we love but see no longer,
with John, Mary, Peter and all your saints,
that in your Father's house we may come to the place
you have prepared for us.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the sake of
your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

As Jesus taught us, so we pray: Our Father in heaven....

This Carol may be said or sung:

Ding dong merrily on high,
In heav'n the bells are ringing:
Ding dong! verily the sky
Is riv'n with angel singing
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below,
Let steeple bells be swungen,
And "Io, io, io!"
By priest and people sungen
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime
Your matin chime, ye ringers,
May you beautifully rhyme
Your eve'time song, ye singers
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!

Let us pray:

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that the Word made flesh
proclaimed by your apostle John
may ever abide and live within us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(L) Grace from the eternal Father be with you;
grace from the Word made flesh be with you;
grace from the Spirit of truth be with you;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

(L) Let us bless the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

All: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace, and rise with Christ in glory.
Amen.

Evening Prayer for this week

O Lord open our lips,
and our mouth shall show forth your praise.

O God make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

You laid the foundation of the earth
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

A lamp or candle may be lit.

Blessed are you, Sovereign God,
our light and our salvation,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
To dispel the darkness of our night
you sent forth your Son, the firstborn of all creation,
to be the Christ, the light of the world.
Rejoicing in the mystery of the Word made flesh,
we acclaim him Emmanuel, as all creation sings to you:
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

This hymn may be said or sung:

Of the Father's heart begotten,
ere the world from chaos rose,
he is Alpha: from that fountain
all that is and has been flows;
he is Omega, of all things
yet to come the mystic close,
evermore and evermore.

O how blest that wondrous birthday,
when the Maid the curse retrieved,
brought to birth mankind's salvation,
by the Holy Ghost conceived;
and the Babe, the world's redeemer,
in her loving arms received,
evermore and evermore.

Sing, ye heights of heaven, his praises;
angels and archangels, sing!
Wheresoe'er ye be, ye faithful,
Let your joyous anthems ring,
every tongue his name confessing,
countless voices answering,
evermore and evermore.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,
we pray with one heart and mind:

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise
now and for ever. Amen.

A Psalm is said: Mon 128; Tue 132; Wed 65; Thurs 90; Fri 115; Sat 46 ending with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

*Two Scripture Readings now follow (see below). Between
the two readings we say:*

All Christ is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.

- 1 The Father has delivered us from the dominion of
darkness, ♦
and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved
Son;
- 2 In whom we have redemption, ♦
the forgiveness of our sins.
- 3 He is the image of the invisible God, ♦
the firstborn of all creation.
- 4 For in him all things were created, ♦
in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.
- 5 All things were created through him and for him, ♦
he is before all things and in him all things hold
together.
- 6 He is the head of the body, the Church, ♦
he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.
- 7 In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell; ♦
and through him God was pleased to reconcile all
things.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All Christ is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.

Readings:

Monday Isaiah 49 v 14 - 25; Mark 10 v 13 - 16
Tuesday Jonah 1; Colossians 1 v 1 - 14
Wednesday: Jonah 2; Colossians 1 v 15 - 23
Thursday: Jonah 3 - 4; Colossians 1 v 24 to 2 v 7
Friday: Deuteronomy 30 ; Acts 3 v 1 - 16
Saturday: Ruth 1; Colossians 2 v 8 - end

After the second reading we say:

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth.

And we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth.

Gospel Cantic: The Magnificat (The Song of Mary)

When peaceful silence lay over all,
and night was in the midst of her swift course:
from your royal throne, O God, down from the heavens,
leapt your almighty Word.

1) My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit
rejoices in God my Saviour; he has looked with favour on
his lowly servant.

2) From this day all generations will call me blessed; the
Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his
name.

3) He has mercy on those who fear him, from generation
to generation.

4) He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered
the proud in their conceit.

5) Casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting
up the lowly.

6) He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the
rich away empty.

7) He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, to
remember his promise of mercy.

8) The promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and
his children for ever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

*Repeat what was said at the beginning of the Magnificat for
the appropriate day.*

*Prayers of thanksgiving are made for the day that is
ending. Intercessions are offered for the church, the world
and for individuals, the sick and the departed.*

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

The Collect:

Almighty God,
who wonderfully created us in your own image
and yet more wonderfully restored us
through your Son Jesus Christ:
grant that, as he came to share our humanity,
so we may share the life of his divinity;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

This Carol may be said or sung:

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour is born

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

Let us pray:

Loving God, at this time of crisis when so many are
suffering, we pray for our nation and our world. Give our
leaders wisdom, our Health Service strength, our people
hope. Lead us through these parched and difficult days to
the fresh springs of joy and comfort that we find in Jesus
Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray, and in your great
mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

May God, who has called us out of darkness
into his marvellous light,
bless us and fill us with peace. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.



**HAPPY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**