

**ALL SAINTS CHURCH BOYNE HILL
MAIDENHEAD
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YOUNG SAINTS. Young Saints returns this Sunday, 7 January for the new Term. YS meets in the Birinus Room at 10.00am (if you don't know where that is, just ask one of the Welcomers at the door). YS is for primary / junior school age children and includes a bible story and art, craft and other activities. The children join the service in church as we come to receive communion.

Dear Parishioners and Friends of All Saints, Boyne Hill,



The Wise Men and the Shepherds...

For some, Christmas is over by the time the children are back at school and the dreariness of January takes over. But for Christians, the Christmas Season is one that is rich in stories and symbolism – this coming Sunday we celebrate the arrival of the Wise Men (or kings) at the manger, with symbolism in the journeying to find God, in the opposition of secular authority represented by the iniquitous King Herod, and in the gifts which the Wise Men offer at the crib. There is much to ponder in that part of the Christmas story.

But let's not rush on too quickly – I want to just pause awhile with the new born child Jesus and be with the shepherds as they spend time with him. Their story is well known. We are told they lived on the hillside above Bethlehem with their sheep. They were probably paid shepherds, looking after sheep owned by others richer than themselves. And then they hear the song of the angels, announcing to them – yes, to simple shepherds – the birth of Jesus in the nearby town and inviting them to “go and see”. And “go and see” is what they do, and when they find Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus, they worship and adore the Christ Child.

Simple actions, but so profound – they are open to the song of the angels, they are ready to hear. Do we allow time and space to hear God’s angels singing, or are we so surrounded by the clamour of daily life that we fail to hear the sound of God’s song to us?

And then there is taking the time to “go and see”, to respond to what we have heard with wonder, hope and trust. Jesus never forces himself upon us, the Christ Child didn’t go out onto the hillside to confront them – there is always the need for a response, to follow the call, to “go and see”. And when we have followed the invitation of God, however that might come to us (and we have heard that invitation often enough in these days around Christmas Day), we come to worship. Worship is the first, the most primal, response to God as we see throughout the pages of the Bible from the response of Abraham in the book of Genesis onwards. Worship puts us into a right relationship to God – a relationship of created being kneeling before God the Creator. And everything follows on from this, our hope, our desire to live a changed life, the meeting of God’s love with our basic need to be loved, and our desire to transform the lives of others as we ourselves are being transformed.

Surely the Shepherds returned from the manger to the hillside changed by their experience. We are told that after worshipping the Christ Child and presenting their gifts, the three Wise Men “returned by another way” – surely a metaphor for “living life in a different way” after their encounter with the Christ Child. A metaphor, perhaps, for leaving behind our selfishness and our ego and looking instead to grow in love and compassion, finding strength and inspiration in our encounters day by day with God, and always looking for the well-being of those with whom we deal on a daily basis. Called by the song of the angels, and led by the star of God’s light, to live as Jesus lived.

Fr John

RESOURCES FOR THE WEEK

Thursday 4 January	8.00pm Choir Practice
Sunday 7	10.00am Parish Eucharist for the Epiphany Celebrant: Fr John Preacher: Fr Jeremy
	12 noon Holy Baptism Please pray for ThomasJames-Jordan & Jake Jordan and their family
Monday 8	9.30am Morning Prayer
Tuesday 9	9.30am Morning Prayer 2.30pm Tuesday Club in the Parish Centre see p 4 for details
Wednesday 10	10.00am Eucharist Celebrant: Fr Jeremy 3.00pm Open the Book at Larchfield School

PRAYER INTENTIONS

We pray that we may know the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the Wise Men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ Child this Christmas.

We pray for the schools of our parish, and for all families, as children return to school and young people to university and other study. We remember the staff, teachers and governors who work together to care for and teach our young people, and for the Open The Book teams as they share Bible stories with children in our schools.

We continue to pray for peace in the Holy Land and Middle East more generally, the Ukraine, Sudan, Iran and all other places of violence and oppression. We remember refugees and asylum seekers, and the homeless of our country, as we offer what support we are able to give and pray for their wellbeing.

We pray for those of our parish and congregation in any kind of need or distress at this time, and especially for Michael, Kirsten and Maddy; for Suzette, Danielle, Paul Latham, Doris Winn, Birmta Zadinane, Edite Zadinane, Heidi Webb, Tadeusz, Christopher, Sylvia Denison, Cheryl Brookes, Gordon Kerrison, Sylvia Telford, Eddie Sheppard, and Carol Sheppard, Barbara Bannister, Janet Emerson, Liz Holloway, Hugh Boulter, Simon Cowdery, Joseph White, Morieza Seraj, Scopas Lado, Mageret Ego, Jim Goff, Gill Deane-Williams, Simon Fullarton, Vera Shaw, Abbas Heidari, Audrey Burch and Anne Pennock.

May they all know the healing peace and presence of Christ. We pray for those who bring help and healing to those in need, those who are caring for loved ones at this time and for staff and residents of care homes in our parish.

We pray for the recently departed, amongst them Gerald Groffman, Gillian Richmond and David Davies, and for all who mourn the loss of a loved one at this time.

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 7 JANUARY THE EPIPHANY

COLLECT

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.

O T READING Isaiah 50: 1 - 6

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

GOSPEL Matthew 2: 1 – 12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.” Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

MUSIC

Prelude: Chorale Prelude on 'Stuttgart' *Flor Peeters*

Opening hymn: 96 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning

Gradual hymn: 95 Bethlehem, what greater city

Presentation of gifts: 105 We three kings of Orient are

Offertory hymn: 94 As with gladness men of old

Communion hymn: 103 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

Closing hymn: 99 Hail to the Lord's anointed

Postlude: Epilogue on 'Dix' *W Harris*

TUESDAY CLUB 9 JANUARY 2.30pm IN THE PARISH CENTRE

Do come along and join our social afternoon to welcome 2024; there may be a light-hearted quiz, and there will certainly be a chance to catch up with friends old and new.



CHURCH KEYS

We are short of keys for the church and parish centre doors. If you are holding on to keys which you no longer need would you kindly return them to the parish office or me as it is expensive and time-consuming to have to have more cut.

Ken Smith



Don't forget to see if there are any cards for you still in the rack at the back of Church, or maybe there are some for people who live near you who weren't able to get to church over Christmas – could you drop them off?

We wish a very happy and peaceful 2024 to all our readers, and to all members of our Church and Parish.

From Fr Jeremy and Monika, Fr John, our Churchwardens, Ken and John and the Parish News Team

CARE4CALAIS TOILETRY APPEAL

Asylum seekers face many challenges even after arriving in the UK. They are not allowed to work so do not have money, even to spend on what we would see as basic essentials.

One practical action we can take to help is to donate toiletries.

If you are able to support, please bring your donations and leave them in the box at the back of church.

Thank you!

Claire Foley claire.foley@fit2live.me.uk

