

Epiphany News

The magazine of Holy Epiphany Church

December 2018/January 2019



Special Services for Christmas

19th Carols and Readings 7.00pm

24th Christingle 3.30pm

Carols by Candlelight 5.30pm

Midnight Communion 11.00pm

25th Christmas Family Communion 10.00am

We look forward to welcoming you

May God's peace and Jesus' love fill your hearts and homes this Christmas

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**There is a loop system available in church.
Please adjust your hearing aid to the relevant setting**





Letter from David Thompson

Dear friends,

Christmas appears to need so much planning. Preparations required for the birth of our two grandchildren this year - with nurseries to be painted, clothes, equipment and furniture to be purchased - pale into insignificance compared with the work required to celebrate the birth of a baby, born over 2000 years ago, by having a few days of holiday with much spending and excessive eating and drinking!

Very little preparation appears to have gone into the birth of Jesus, at least on the part of His parents. If only Joseph had used Trip Advisor he could have organised a proper hotel and not been left with the stable. However, joking aside, we can be sure that God had a plan. Jesus did not just arrive; He was promised hundreds of years beforehand and He was born with a purpose and mission to humankind. God Himself came among us, to experience and to share our humanity and, through this, to demonstrate His love and commitment to each one of us. The cycle of the years as we celebrate the birth of Christ is a repeating reminder that we are each loved by God.

Today, perhaps more than at any other time in our history, society looks forward and not back; anticipates the future instead of enjoying the present. We plan events to do in our lives, but no sooner has one thing passed then we are already looking for the next. We tick events and celebrations off from our 'to do' list and forget them. Our diaries become a progression of dates to be passed and not necessarily days to be enjoyed.

If we are not careful, Christmas itself can be just another event; a family gathering that needs to be prepared for, certainly, but one which is then 'ticked off' before we rush headlong into 2019. We know in our hearts that Christmas should be more significant in our lives but our busyness somehow prevents it being so.

Let us go slow this Christmas and New Year season so that we have time for each other. Let us enjoy the gift of each moment, find time for God and, dare I say it, time for ourselves.

To help slow things down this year may I commend to you a leaflet that you may pick up from church called '**Follow the Star**'? It's produced by the Church of England and contains a series of reflections that take you on a journey from Christmas Eve through to the arrival of the Magi on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6th. Each reflection has a theme, picture, short Bible passage from the Christmas narrative, a prayer and, perhaps most importantly, a challenge to consider how we might act or live differently in the future.

If Christmas is about the birth of a child that changed not only our world but our personal future then it has to consist of more than a few days of parties and excess spending.

I pray that Christmas this year may be the start of something special for each of us personally. Let us together begin a journey and Follow the Star.

God Bless

FollowTheStar



FaithTime by Jan Farrow

I was recently taking Mopsy for a walk in the New

Forest; it was a lovely day and I had taken a picnic with me. As I sat in the car munching, I spied a lady approaching, although still a little way away. The reason I noticed her was that she had six dogs and a push chair. Now I have enough trouble with one dog. SIX seems a little excessive to say the least. They were not as big as Mopsy, but still!!

Needless to say, she had my attention. Suddenly she stopped walking and the six dogs gathered round her, apparently with no bidding command. Amazing. The lady then put leads on three, placed one in the push chair and off they set with the other two dogs walking obediently by her side.

The car was parked right next to me; up they all came. The dogs arranged themselves in a neat queue whilst the back of the car was made ready for them. The dog in the push chair was placed in first, then each dog was either picked up or jumped in by themselves.

By this time, I was quite in awe of this lady and ventured a comment. 'That was a wonderful display', says I, 'How do you do it?' 'We love being together' she said, 'They are all rescue dogs from a puppy farm'.



Well that got me thinking, spiritually, that is. I always find it difficult to separate Easter and Christmas - both festivals are about love and being rescued. You will have noticed the shadow of the cross in the crib scene; you cannot have one without the other.

You might recall we sometimes recycle our church Christmas tree at Easter and cut it into the shape of a cross. We bring symbols of Christ's suffering to the cross, and then on Easter Sunday we joyfully dress it with flowers as we celebrate his resurrection.

Put simply, because God **loved us** so much, he sent his son Jesus to live among us. He died, but then came alive again that we might be **set free, rescued** from ourselves, from our sinful nature.

'This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.' 1 John 4 verse 9

Now Christmas is almost upon us and you probably don't want to think in terms of being set free and rescued until Easter; but that is what love and especially God's love is all about. My lady with the rescue dogs had it right when she said, "We just love being together."

As we gaze on the infant Jesus once more this Christmas tide, let's whisper, "Come, o come, Emmanuel (God with us). Come into my whole being, bring your love and peace afresh into my heart and mind. Help me to love you as you love me; thank you for giving me new life." Amen.



O come, O come Emmanuel
O come, O come Emmanuel

Men's BIG Breakfast *by Andy Renton*

We have a breakfast for men most months of the year, but the January breakfast is always something a bit special.

In January, the main focus of our Men's Breakfast is to invite friends, neighbours and relations who don't normally come to our breakfast meetings. We serve a FULL ENGLISH BREAKFAST and as this is a multi-church event it's a great opportunity to meet new people and make new friends. So if you're feeling a bit 'flat' once the Christmas festivities are over, why not come along to **Holdenhurst Village Hall** on **26 January** at **8.00am**. If you'd like to go, please contact me first on 07484 203076 or by e-mail andy.renton56@gmail.com. A rough idea of numbers helps with catering and it means that I can look out for you if it's your first time with us. See you there!



News from Agape Outreach Ministry

Dennis and Sheila Eaton share the latest news from the work this church supports in Malawi.

By the time you read this, some of you will have heard Dennis and Sheila speak at the November Men's Breakfast. They have written for the magazine in advance of our publication date to update you with some news from Malawi.



- ❖ The challenges continue in the remote rural area in Malawi where we are working, with people struggling to access water and living with inadequate food, without medical care and without hope.
- ❖ We have just registered another 115 children in our two pre-schools for orphans and vulnerable children.
- ❖ What a privilege it is to be able to show the practical love and compassion of Christ to elderly or disabled people and to orphans as well as teaching about the wonderful hope we have through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Praise God that for the first time ever a harvest of maize has been gathered in from our field during the dry season as a result of the recently installed irrigation scheme. This extra food source will greatly assist the feeding of our pre-school orphans, vulnerable children and elderly people.

Do please continue to pray for the work of Agape Outreach Ministry in Malawi and for the safety of Dennis and Sheila, as well as their fellow workers, during their time in Malawi. Life there is difficult and can be dangerous.

Parish Registers from October

Baptisms – We welcome into the church family:

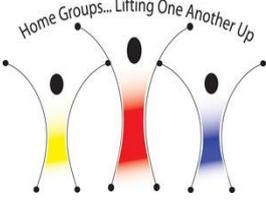
28 October

Charlie Jesse Jeans

Arlo George Watling



What's happening at Epiphany in December and January?

 <p>Church Services</p> <p>For details of our special Christmas services please see the front cover</p>	<p>1st Sunday 9.00am 10.00am 4.30pm</p> <p>1st Sunday 9.00am 10.00am</p> <p>2nd Sunday 10.00am</p> <p>3rd Sunday 9.00am 10.00am 3.00pm</p> <p>4th Sunday 10.00am</p> <p>5th Sunday 10.00am</p> <p>2 December (Toy Service) Breakfast @ 9 – Especially for families with young children Coffee followed by a short, informal Family Service Advent carols</p> <p>6 January (Patronal Festival) Breakfast @ 9 – Especially for families with young children Coffee followed by a short, informal Family Service</p> <p>9 December and 13 January Holy Communion with Roots for Children and Crèche</p> <p>16 December and 20 January Holy Communion (said) All age service Messy Church</p> <p>23 December and 27 January Holy Communion with Roots for Children and Crèche</p> <p>30 December All age service</p> <p>Wednesday Holy Communion 12.15pm on 19 December and 16 January</p>
	<p>Home Groups – friendly groups, who meet fortnightly to share fellowship, study God's word and pray. New members welcome, please talk to Jan Farrow.</p> <p><u>Monday Evening Group meets at 7.30pm</u> 3 December, 17 December, 21 January</p> <p><u>Wednesday Morning Group meets at 10.00am</u> 5 December, 9 January, 23 January</p>
<p>PRAYER <i>changes things</i></p>	<p>Prayer Meetings in the Jubilee Room – all are welcome</p> <p>Saturday evenings 6 – 7pm – Coffee and Prayer on 1 December and 5 January</p> <p>Tuesday afternoons 2 – 3pm on 11 December; 8 and 22 January</p>
	<p>Epiphany Bright Stars – Parent/carer and Toddler Group on Tuesday mornings in term-time at 9.30am in the church and Jubilee Room. Last meeting 18 December, restarts 8 January. Contact Jodie Burge on 01202 776270</p>
	<p>Messy Church – family fun for parents and children followed by a shared meal. Lots of craft activities, biscuit or cake decorating, Bible stories and buffet tea. 3rd Sunday of the month. Next meetings 16 December (Messy Nativity) and 20 January, 3.00 – 5.00pm. Contact Lynley Wilkes on 01202 823261</p>
	<p>Men's Breakfast – Next meeting will be the Big Breakfast at Holdenhurst Village Hall on 26 January, 8.00 – 10.00am. Full English breakfast and a talk from an invited Christian speaker. All men welcome. Contact Andy on 07484 203076 or andy.renton56@gmail.com.</p>
	<p>Muscliff Care Home:– Mondays at 2.45pm, monthly 10 December (Carol Service) 14 January</p>
	<p>Epiphany Pre school meets Monday - Friday in the church hall during term-time from 9.00am to 3.00pm. Closed during Christmas holidays. Please check dates with the pre-school staff. Phone 01202 612337 for more information</p>

	<p>Tea Cosy – tea and coffee and time for a chat. Mondays in term-time from 9.30am – 12.00 in the Jubilee Room. Last meeting 17 December, restarts on 7 January.</p>		<p>Choir practice - Please contact Susan Bright for up to date information. See the 'Who's Who' page for contact details.</p>
	<p>Lunch Club – social time with coffee at 10.30am followed by games. Lunch served at 1.00pm prepared by 'Crumbs'. A 2 course meal costs £4 and (pre-booked) menu choices are available. No Lunch Club on 26 December or 2 January. Please contact the church office on 01202 612337 to book.</p>		
	<p>Pie and a Pint – an opportunity for men to chat and 'put the world to rights'. 7.00pm Wetherspoon's in Winton. Next regular meeting is on 30 January. Contact Alan Hogg on 07963 706907. All men welcome.</p>		
	<p>Beavers Jacqui Elena jacqui.elena15@gmail.com Cubs Jan Kingsland 01202 517627 Scouts Simon Blake 07500 901 561</p>		<p>Brownies Sam Pattermore 07930 581851 Guides and Rainbows Sandra Coomber 07712 129445</p>

"Mary" Christmas
 Three Marys - an unfolding drama
 Holy Epiphany Church, Castle Lane West
8 December
 7.00 for 7.30 - 9.00pm
 For women of all ages
 Bring your friends, relax and enjoy light refreshments
 and conversation

Mustard Seed Relief Mission – showing love in action

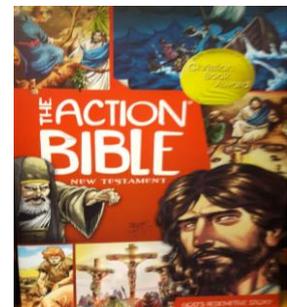
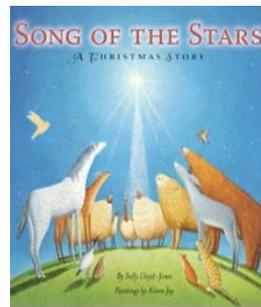
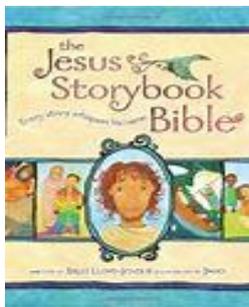


Thank you to everyone for your generosity. Thanks to you and the children at Epiphany School we have been able to send shoeboxes full of Christmas gifts to the children of Moldova again this year. Thank you too, to Mark Vincent for co-ordinating the collection.





Books for your children or (great) grandchildren for Christmas



If you are thinking of buying a child a book for Christmas,
why not come and have a look at these?

You can see these and other books which tell the Christmas story for children at several morning services during December, at Bright Stars toddler group, at Messy Church and at Breakfast @9.
Do come and browse.

See Mary Hogg if you would like to buy something or have a request

A Prayer for Christmas

Eternal God, at Christmas time you gave us the greatest gift of all. Your love for us and all creation is expressed in the beauty and vulnerability of a new-born child. Our joy is sung by the angels. Our presence in the story is seen in ordinary shepherds. Our homage is made by those men from the east. In amazement we can only say thank you. Help us to continue telling the story. Amen. (adapted from 'The Intercessions Resource Book' by John Pritchard)

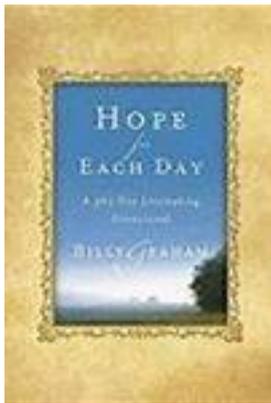


You might like to join us at one of the times when we pray together. For dates and times, please see the centre pages of the magazine. Don't worry, you don't have to pray out loud if you don't want to.

“Hope for Each Day” – by Mary Hogg

I’ve stolen this title from Billy Graham, the well-known international Christian speaker who died last year aged 99. It’s what he called his book of daily Bible - based readings, published in 2012.

Billy Graham explains why Bible reading is valuable for us all far better than I can. Just look at what he says in his introduction: -



“When I think about God’s love I tend to dwell upon all the good things He has done for me. But then I must stop and realise that even when circumstances have been hard or the way unclear, God has still surrounded me with his love. God’s love is just as

real and just as powerful in the darkness as it is in the light. And that is why we can have hope!

Every day I turn to the Bible to give me strength and wisdom for the day and hope for the future. Its words have seen me through good times and bad - through times of happiness and grief, health and sickness, victory and disappointment. God’s Word can do the same for you.”

What will be the effects in our lives? He goes on to quote a poem: -

**“Just to be tender, just to be true
Just to be glad the whole day through
Just to be merciful, just to be mild
Just to be trustful as a child:
Just to be gentle, kind and sweet
Just to be helpful with willing feet . . .
Just to let love be our daily key
That is God’s will for you and me.”**

(Author unknown; quoted by Billy Graham in *Hope for Each Day: morning and evening devotions* published by Thomas Nelson, 2012 £14.99)

Billy Graham’s book is just one way of starting to read the Bible regularly. This December look out in church for a display of other books and booklets to browse through. They are available to buy – see Mary Hogg.

Several people here find ‘New Daylight’ or ‘Day by Day with God’ Bible notes helpful. Do look at these and talk to Trevor and Ann Witts if you would like to order one of them for yourself.

Toy Service



2 December



Coffee served from 9.45am
followed by family service

We invite you to bring a toy to donate
to a child who otherwise would not
receive a gift this Christmas

Advent Carol Service



2 December

4.30pm

Come and join us as we celebrate the
Advent season with carols from the
choir and others for all to sing

From the Editors

This magazine is free; however, a donation of at least £1.20 a copy would help to offset the costs of printing. Contributions are welcome for consideration for our next edition - by **15 January** please.

Disclaimer: Views expressed in Epiphany News are those of contributors, not the editors or the ministry team. Editors reserve the right to edit or shorten articles or hold them for a later edition. - Mary Hogg and Julie Renton



Prophets of the Old Testament: how they speak to us today *by Lynley Wilkes*

Isaiah - "The King is coming . . ."

High-profile people who have a message to tell will encourage and enthuse many, but others will feel only anger towards them. We only have to listen to politicians to know that we all have different opinions.

Whatever your thoughts on Teresa May and Brexit, not even her own Conservative party can agree on her stance. Some are extremely angry; others support her. The whole world must have an opinion on Donald Trump, with divisions among Americans about his fitness to govern.

The thing about controversial people is that they make people sit up and listen, and perhaps step up and respond to what they are saying. They are the people who make us think and reflect.

The prophet Isaiah was such a person. Like many prophets, his message created controversy. Born about 700 years before Christ, Isaiah was recognised as the greatest of all prophets. You will have heard his name before, maybe in a Christmas reading about the coming of the Messiah. Yet how much do we really know about this great man and his message from God? As we enter the Christmas period, let's discover more about Isaiah and God's remarkable story of Jesus the King coming into our lives.

God called Isaiah after a time of turbulence in the life of the Israelite nation. The first half of the book of Isaiah is about Israel's sin; the second half is about God's forgiveness. Does this sound familiar? A lot of the Old Testament is about God's anger towards the Israelites and their sin in turning from him, followed by his forgiveness once they have repented. We still hear this theme in the New Testament but now we see the ultimate redeemer of our sin, Jesus Christ, the person that much of Isaiah's message was about. The book of Isaiah includes historical prophecy about Israel, Judah and other nations, but almost one-third contains prophecies about Jesus Christ, talking about both His first and second comings. Isaiah tells us more about this than any other Old Testament prophet.

This is some of what he said about Jesus: **"He shall judge between the nations"** (Isaiah 2:4). He would be born of a virgin and be called **"Immanuel"** (Isaiah 7:14). He would be a **"stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"** (Isaiah 8:14). An eternal **"government will be upon His shoulder"** and He would be called the **"Prince of Peace"** (Isaiah 9:6-7). The Holy Spirit would **"rest upon Him"** (Isaiah 11:2).

The most important chapter relating to our salvation is Isaiah 53. It explains how much Christ would suffer during His sacrifice for man's sins. Isaiah 53:2-5 says He was **"despised and rejected,"** and **"by His stripes [wounds] we are healed"**. He was an **"offering for sin"** (verse 10) and He **"poured out His soul unto death"** (verse 12).

In the prophecy of Isaiah, God revealed that Jesus would come to earth first as a human to deal with sin and then again, glorified, after His resurrection from the grave, to establish the Kingdom of God. Jews did not understand the dualism of Christ's first and second coming, so many rejected Him when He came as a human because He did not fulfil the prophecies of ruling over the earth and establishing an eternal government, which will happen during His second coming.

For Christians this time of the year is about the King of Glory coming into our fragile world. How many of us are really waiting for this King's return?

We look forward with excitement but also with trepidation - what I am expecting? Isaiah's prophecies are about Jesus' first and second coming. We know the first happened, therefore we can be sure the second will. As we celebrate what God has done through Jesus' birth we can celebrate our future with Him - the King's return.

Faith Stories – Marion Richards *(interviewed by Jan Farrow)*

Marion, it's lovely to be able to come and talk with you about your faith. My first question to you is this, what is the most important thing in your Christian life that you would like to pass on to others?

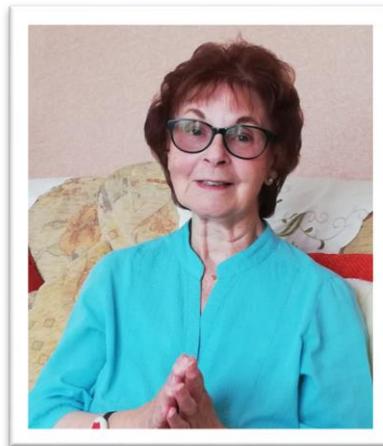
I think I have to say, prayer, Bible reading and relationship with God in Christ and the Holy Spirit. It's the gospel message of salvation - God's gift of love to the entire world.

My children often ask me to pray for them; this is really important. I have met so many people who say they don't know how to pray. I try to encourage them to have hope, seek and be willing to open their heart to receive whatever God has in store for them. God will do the rest - He can work so powerfully. I'd urge anyone to take the first step on the ladder of prayer.

EPHESIANS 2 verses 4, 5 & 8
'But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved through His gift of faith.'

To me, you are what I would call a prayer warrior, Marion.

Prayer is the foundation of my relationship with God. I was once told I have the gift of intercession. It took me some time to understand this. If it means I can talk to God about other people's needs as well as my own, then, yes.



I might be on a bus, in the doctor's surgery or out shopping. I find myself asking God to help, heal and bless others. As you know, Jan, I'm always drawing on scripture.

Yes, we noticed at home group that you had a new Bible as your old one is so crammed full with prayers and reflections. You have a passion for God's word.

Yes, I enjoy writing prayerful reflections stemming from my daily readings. I sense the Holy Spirit opening God's Word to me and I get a 'light bulb' inspiration. I find this so exciting. It's an adventure! At the moment I'm studying Revelation, the last book of the Bible.

Marion you are very fortunate not to have too many distractions

True. My age-related mobility difficulties restrict my physical activity. It can be frustrating adapting to my limitations but, the upside is I've more time free to spend at home with God.

The comforting truth is whatever our age or circumstance, God's loving presence is always with us. There is always something

we can do in His name to encourage and support one another.

I do believe we go through different seasons in life. For me, there is Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, spiritually speaking. I feel we can be in any one of those seasons throughout our lives; we never stop growing.

That is so true, Marion. So where are you at now?

I trust in God completely. I have peace in my heart and mind because I know His loving presence is eternally with me. Life for me is a fantastic journey of relationship faith.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21
'Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen'

Marion, thank you so much for sharing your journey of faith. We really appreciate your prayerful ministry amongst us.

I pray that God will continue to bless you in every way.





Messy Nativity

Sunday 16th December



Craft and games from 3 – 3.45 pm
in the Church Hall

Tea and Cake in church at 3.45pm

Followed by time to dress up
ready for our special nativity service

**We welcome everyone to join us for the nativity service
in the church at 4.30pm**

It was almost time for Jesus to be born and, like lots of other people, Mary and Joseph had to travel many miles from their home to be registered in the city of Bethlehem. It was crowded and there was nowhere for them to stay; but a kind man let them stay in his stable. Can you help Mary and Joseph find their way?



**The angel said to the shepherds, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people."
(Luke 2v10 GNB)**

