

Bridges Group News
Date: 7th January 2023
Sunday: Epiphany



News for the pews hosted by Priors Marston

Greetings from the people of Priors Hardwick with very best wishes for 2024

We only catch up with the Wise Men as they arrive at Bethlehem so it's easy to assume they were a group of friends who'd known one another for a long time through their interest in the stars. But they were rich – they owned camels- lots of them would have been required for the 600 mile (minimum) journey they would have made to Bethlehem. Tradition and more research suggest that the three of them didn't get together until they arrived much closer to Bethlehem. Some images even show them with very different physiques- representatives of various nations coming together as they followed directions provided by the Guiding Star.

Their gifts were appropriate, prophetic – representing kingship, divinity, and death; but although they came from quite widely different geographical locations, they foretold that one baby.

But those gifts also represented human healing and well-being, because they were being used in medical, holistic and therapeutic ways, using the best of human knowledge and intelligence, more than 1,000 years before Jesus was born.

And so thirdly, those three gifts represented past, present and future potential – because even today they are being used in the promotion of better human health.

So could those gifts, be considered representative of the life and ministry of Jesus as a travelling first aid person? He did go around helping and healing people. He was the baby who was born for yesterday, today and for ever.

We pray that nations may come together with a common purpose as did the Wise men; that the riches of the natural world may be used for the wellbeing of all mankind rather than for destruction.

And that in human society opponents may be seen not as enemies, but as co-members of God's creation.

Please note that the readings for Sunday 14th differ from those on the grid. This is because Easter is very early – 31st March which doesn't leave enough Sundays before Lent begins. Sunday 21st will be Genesis 14:17-20 and John 2:1-11. This will make room for Candlemas on Sunday 28th January as on the grid.!

Rectory reflection from Rev Andy

An author once interviewed 50 famous people along with friends and relatives and asked them if they had ever had an epiphany, "a moment of great sudden revelation; an intuitive grasp of reality through something usually simple and striking; an illuminating discovery, realization or disclosure".

She discovered that every single one of them had indeed had such an epiphany – a moment that stayed with them for the rest of their life. It was something that left a permanent legacy, something that changed their life, and meant that they were never quite the same.

Maybe you can relate to that – maybe you can identify a particular time or event or person that changed your life for ever. Sometimes people can point to such a revelation when they first find God. It's a moment when the world is opened up and we see everything differently.

Suddenly we realise that "we can never go back to being who we were." There are those big moments, but there are also many little epiphanies that we experience, when we realise that we have been wrong about something or someone, when our preconceptions are challenged, when our eyes are opened to something new. They all change us in some way. Like the wise men we are all on a journey. Every so often we wake up and realize that something new, something revelatory, something powerful has just happened to us and when that really sinks in, when it is very real for us we know we have to take a different path in life.

May Gods light shine on us, in us, and through us in 2024, leading us, changing us, and maybe using us to bring others that transforming experience of Epiphany.

Prayer

Lord God, transform our lives. May others see your love shine through us. May our words and actions constantly point to you; may we put You first in everything and serve You always. We ask you to be with us this new year where we know and feel and are guided by your presence. Whatever the year holds may we never lose sight of you.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Looking ahead...

- Priors Marston PCC is meeting this Friday 5th Jan at 2.30 at Plum Tree Cottage
- Priors Hardwick PCC 15th January at 7pm
- Group Council meeting 23rd January at 7pm
- Lower Shuckburgh PCC 30th January at 7pm

Services this Sunday: 7th January, Epiphany	Services next Sunday: 14th January, Epiphany 2
9.00am Family Service at Priors Hardwick 10.30am Morning Worship at Priors Marston 10.30am Holy Communion at Napton 10.30am Morning Worship, Lay led at Stockton	10.30am Holy Communion CP at Priors Marston 10.30am Morning Worship at Napton 10.30am Holy Communion in the Methodist Tradition in Stockton 5.00pm Evensong in Priors Hardwick
Bible readings for the week are: Isaiah 60:1-6 , Matthew 2:1-12	Bible readings for the week are: Genesis 1:1-5, Mark 1:4-11

(For more details of events and diary dates, see our website: www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk or the parish magazines)

Next Week's Bridges Group News will be hosted by Napton.