

Virtual Church News

10 January 2021

Baptism of Christ

1st Sunday of Epiphany



Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or call Jacqui on 356993.

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

I am so conscious that people feel isolated, tired and fed up at the moment. These are not normal times and another lock down is not the start of 2021 that we were all hoping for, but I want you to feel encouraged that you are not alone in all of this. Although we may feel that physical churches are closed, the church as a community of believers is very much open for business. It is not an exclusive club for religious people, but an opportunity for anybody who wants it to enter into a deep relationship with God.

I think in this story of the baptism of Jesus we begin to understand what this relationship means.

When John the Baptist was in the wilderness the religious people expected a kind of Old Testament Prophet. John came, calling for repentance and baptising people. It would have been, at least for the Pharisees, a very familiar ritual. They had used it as a kind of ritual washing for those gentiles who wanted to join the Jewish faith, and to be honest most of these proselytes were never fully accepted by the religious people because they were not of Jewish blood. When they came to John in the wilderness the religious people must have been somewhat offended. Then John the Baptist said something like; 'you may be religious but frankly you are worse than the gentiles. I actually want you all to repent and be baptised, not just the gentiles.

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Services in Church

During the National Lockdown, although worshiping in Churches is permitted, we have decided not to hold any such services. There will therefore be no physical (9.30am) services in our Churches for the time being. We will let you know when there is any change.

A Reading for the Week

Mark 1:4-11

⁴And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Virtch

Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



Message from Rev Eric Lomax *continued*

The Gospel of Mark begins by calling this Good news. It is the good news that we enter a new relationship with God in which we can call him Abba, which in Hebrew is a word more akin to daddy rather than just father.

John did not point to himself as a Prophet, as the religious people were expecting, but rather he pointed to somebody else; somebody greater than him would come after him, somebody whose shoes John was not worthy to untie. John said I will wash you with water, but he will wash you with The Holy Spirit.

For about 30 years there was a growing awareness in Jesus as he was called to something new and fresh and meaningful. Jesus came and he complied with this ritual of washing (Baptism). The reason he did this was to be alongside us because we carry the burden of sin and he wanted to carry it with us. As Jesus rose from the water after baptism and the water fell from his eyes he somehow faced the world in a new way. It is then that we have the declaration that the Spirit of God descended on him like a dove, and a voice from heaven said 'you are my son'.

Prior to Jesus lots of people had referred to God as Father, but never with such intimacy. Never before has anybody ever been able to refer to God in a close intimate parent and child relationship.

This story is, more than anything, a picture of what we should be like with God and how different the God of the Bible is from anything we understand about religion. This is how God works with us. He does not turn us into religious people but rather we enter a new life with a new awareness of him.

In these difficult times we are like children trying to ride a bike on the bumpy road that lies ahead. We always do so in danger of falling and we really need to pedal like crazy to do God's will in these challenging circumstances. At every point however, there is a loving father right next to us, guiding us every inch of the way. We can call to him any time; 'Abba, Father,' because he loves us.

God Bless

Eric

Please pray with me

Abba, Father,
You are always with us.
Help us to stay close to you,
always trusting in your
strength.
Fill us with your spirit of love,
And Guide us,
through Jesus Christ,



Please include in your prayers

- Our teachers, children and parents who are again coping with home learning.
- All those in our NHS who are struggling to cope with the number of Covid patients.

Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome.

Contact us for login details or if you have any prayer requests.



Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 3 January

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. Our Common Home. How faith can partner with conservation movements.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise from Stirling, discovering the City's connection with the King James Bible.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Ely Cathedral.

Wednesday 13 January

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from the Chapel of Merton College, Oxford.

Suggested Music for this week

Breathe on me, breath of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9s8BFHThfc>

Crown Him with many crowns

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7OCs0d_4vM

Abba Father

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FGRbUrfvZ8&list=RD9FGRbUrfvZ8&start_radio=1

Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044** Available 24 hours a day.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Discovery Group

This bible study group meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings at 8pm. For further details, contact john.c.lambert@gmail.com

For the Children (& young at heart!)

We heard during Advent about John the Baptist being in the wilderness and saying that there was someone else, greater than him, who was to come - Jesus. This week's bible passage (see front page) goes back to the story of John and tells us about people coming to John to be baptised. It also tells us about Jesus being baptised.

Have you been baptised? Perhaps you were baptised as a baby? You will have to ask your parent/carer about it. Some people are baptised as babies/small children but others as adults.

Do you know what Baptism means? It means you move away from sin and rise to new life in God. It is similar to a new creation! See if you can find out what happens when someone is baptised.

Activity

If you have a small piece of acetate sheet (a jam jar or a piece of an old plastic milk bottle will do just as well) and some non-permanent marker pens, write on the acetate something that you want to say sorry to God for (your confession). Then say "Dear God, we are sorry for the things we have done that have hurt you and other people. Please forgive us. Amen." Place your confession in some water and watch the writing disappear as a symbol of God's forgiveness.

Song

May the God of hope

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQAtIWOLHYc>

Prayer

God, our creator, we thank you.

God, our inspiration, we worship you.

God, our rock, we believe in you. Amen.

Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support  the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever. Donations of food can be placed in a box in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets.

Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. Further details can be found on their website: <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

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