

New Year Message

By the time you read this we will have arrived in Adelaide in Australia in temperatures of 40 degrees plus. We will be enjoying the first few days of the New Year with our daughter Sarah and her family who we have not seen for a year since their visit to the United Kingdom in January 2023. Like them and us, New Year hopefully will be a time for fresh and new starts and beginnings. Perhaps like a blank page ready expectantly to record the story or to resolve what the story will be. The wise men from the East travel on following a star. This reminds us that we too are on a journey.... the journey through life. And in these dark days of chaos and challenge the best guide of all is still Jesus the Light of the World.

January 6th is the Feast of the Epiphany which marks the arrival of the Wise Men bearing their gifts to the Christ child in the manger of Bethlehem.

This season opens up for us the facts of who Jesus is...in His Baptism in the River Jordan, by His cousin John, a voice from heaven tells us He is God's own Son....and then in the first of His miracles, at a wedding in Cana, where water is turned into wine, we see a sign of God's abundance and generosity which He longs to share....And finally our Christmas season comes to a close when we remember the swaddling cloths of the manger are soon to be replaced by cloths binding the body for burial...recalling three days later they will be left abandoned by an empty tomb.

And so we leave Bethlehem and Nazareth and Christmas behind and set our face towards Jerusalem and travel on towards Easter via the reverent days of Lent.

Jesus the Light of the World is with us in every step, alongside and pointing the way ahead. He shines into the darkness before us and disperses it. At the same time giving us daily strength to face whatever is before us with confidence and hope.

And so in the coming days we continue to write and share our stories as they develop perhaps sharing them along the way as we encourage one another in our relationship with the Living God who is active all around us.

And so we wish you a Happy and Peaceful year ahead...and look forward to hearing your story on our return at the end of the month just before the weekend when we celebrate the Presentation of Christ with Christingles for All.

John and Sue Richardson

**The Parish of All Saints
With St Philip, Maidstone and
St Stephen, Tovil**

**Sunday 31st December 2023
The Sunday after Christmas Day**



10.00am Morning Worship to prepare for
the New Year at St Philips Church

Next Week's Service's

Sunday 7th January 2024

10.00am Morning Worship at St
Stephens (Archbishop Courtenay
School)

3.30pm Choral Evensong at All Saints

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 in 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.

Reading

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the set time had fully come, God
sent his Son, born of a woman, born under
the law, to redeem those under the law, that
we might receive adoption to
sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent
the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit
who calls out, "Abba,¹ Father." So you are no
longer a slave, but God's child; and since you
are his child, God has made you also an heir.

The Gospel
Luke 2:15-21

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying, and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

January 2024 Sunday Services

- 7th 10am. Morning Worship at St. Stephen's
 - 3.30pm. Choral Evensong at All Saints
 - 14th 10am. Parish Eucharist at All Saints
 - 21st 10am. Parish Eucharist at St. Philip's
 - 28th 10am. Morning Worship Christingle for Adults at St. Stephen's
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Community Café

The community Café will re-open on the 13th of January 2024 10am-2pm.

Special prayers

*Matt 5.3 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven'*

*Daphne Holland, Mary Wheeler, Jane Sadler,
Sue Marks, Pamela Hocking, Claire & Family,
John Wilson, Paul Crease, Joan Bull*

**Vicar: All saints, Maidstone with St.
Philip's, and St. Stephen's Tovil**

The Very Revd. John S. Richardson
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**Please note Revd John will be on Leave
on Wednesdays of each week.**

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We wish you all a Happy New Year