



Connection

Sunday 10th January 2021
Baptism of Christ



View from a Vicarage

A warm welcome to this weeks' edition of the Bredon Hill Group Connection, and firstly may I start by wishing you all a very Happy New Year. Yet even as I write this, I am aware that 2021 is starting with very much in the manner of March 2020, as we find ourselves once again in a national lockdown and an alarming rise and level of Corona Virus cases. There is almost a sense of déjà vu with hospital and medical staff facing unprecedented pressures, schools closing until at least mid-February and everyone being asked to stay at home and minimise travel and shopping to essential journeys only.

Certainly, not the happiest of starts to the new year, although perhaps not altogether surprising given the Christmas restrictions and emerging statistics about a new variant of the virus. However, many people were at least able to celebrate the season of Christmas, both by being able to attend a church service and then at home and with family or friends, even if in a more restricted way than we would have liked.

Our season of Epiphany which started on 6 January enables us to stay with the events of the Christmas story for a little while longer, before we are catapulted into the start of Jesus' ministry as an adult; And our readings for this Sunday focus on Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, for as Jesus arises from the water the Holy Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove a voice of God is heard to say, *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

I am sure that “*pleasing God*” is something we all aspire to do in our daily lives, and surely there can be few better new year resolutions than this. However, pleasing God is not always easy, and can be even more challenging as we come to terms once again with living through a lockdown in winter. Many of us undoubtedly feel gloomy, restricted, bored and even scared about the next few weeks and months, even though we do now have the hope and reality of two vaccines which will be distributed over the next few months.

However, pleasing God can be achieved in the simplest of ways – by trusting in his faithfulness, relying on his promise of never leaving us alone to cope with situations however bleak they maybe, sharing with those we most regularly come into contact with even on the telephone His message of love, compassion and hope, as well as regularly turning to God in prayer and reflection, knowing that as we talk to God about our cares, worries and concerns, He not only listens, but offers to take these burdens from us and in return gives us his everlasting peace.

For many of us, we find a renewal of that peace when we attend church and meet with God through worship. Therefore, it is with a mixed heart that I am writing to advise you that following the Prime Minister’s announcement on Monday evening of an immediate national lockdown, representatives from all the churches across the Bredon Hill Group, met to consider communal worship in the weeks of this current lockdown. Their discussions, and consequent decision, highlighted the need to set an example in terms of following the principles of what the Prime Minister is requiring of people, that of staying at home and protecting the vulnerable and key workers given the rapidly escalating spread of the Coronavirus.

As such, with immediate effect, there was a majority Group decision to suspend all communal worship across the churches within the Bredon Hill Group for the next few weeks, and until the government reviews its’ position and a good proportion of the population have been vaccinated. This is likely to be mid-February. During this time churches will however be open for a minimum of 1 hour per week for private prayer, and the times of these will be decided by each church.

Local worship will therefore be offered through a Zoom service of Morning Prayer at 10.30am every Sunday for the coming weeks of the lockdown, and if you wish to be invited to take part then please let Alison Khan know and she will send you the invitation. (Contact: email acbhteam@gmail.com or telephone 07984 748059). There will also be the weekly Bredon Hill Connection and possibly some additional online services which may be lay led as well as all the Diocesan and Church of England resources which you can access.

So just as God affirms to Jesus that He loves Him, let us find hope and encouragement that knowing we too are children of God, that He loves us as well; As such and in response to this love, let us use this period of lockdown to reflect on how we may seek to use our lives in ways which are pleasing to God, living in the assurance that whatever lies ahead, God will be with us.

My prayer for us all is that 2021 may be a year filled with hope and promise of better times ahead, and may God bless you and all whom you love and care for, today and always.

Allison

Reverend Allison Davies

Vicar of Eckington, Defford with Besford and Associate Priest for the churches of the Bredon Hill Group



Service of Holy Communion for the Baptism of Christ

Collect

Eternal Father,
who at the baptism of Jesus
revealed him to be your Son,
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit,
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;
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

Reading: Acts 19: 1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— altogether there were about twelve of them.

Reading: Mark 1: 4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Post Communion Prayer

Lord of all time and eternity,
you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father
in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:
by the power of your Spirit
complete the heavenly work of our rebirth
through the waters of the new creation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



Prayers for Epiphany 2020

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for this new day and as we gather here this morning to focus on the Baptism of our Lord, let us remember our own Baptisms and our calling to be Christians. May we be filled with such joy as we believe in you, that our hearts overflow with love for you and for all who we meet along our journey.

Lord God and Father, help us to understand the mystery of the baptism of your Son. May we walk in your way, live our life for you and be a mindful presence day by day.

Lord in Your Mercy

Hear our Prayer

At the start of this new year, we are reminded of the worlds' deafness to the message of peace sung by the Christmas angels. We pray for those areas where there is currently war, conflict, and political unrest; We particularly call to mind the tensions between the Democrats and Republicans in the United States of America and those countries in the Middle East and across Africa, such as Iran, Iraq, Syria and Nigeria.

We also imagine how un-silent life is in today's city of Bethlehem and across Israel and Gaza. We pray for all caught up in conflict or its preparations. Father, we ask that you give strength and courage to all peacemakers, and we pray that they will not be dissuaded from the difficult decisions needed to bring about an end to open conflicts or acts of terrorism.

Lord in Your Mercy

Hear our Prayer

Lord as begin a new year, we do so in the storm of a world-wide pandemic, the impact of which to us seems almost beyond our imagination. Therefore, as this country enters lockdown and a new wave of the virus, we pray for all those who are leading the fight in combating it and seeking to heal those suffering from it.

We pray for world leaders who need to make difficult decisions which affect the lives of so many in extremely difficult and changing circumstances; We pray for those working in hospitals and frontline medical services; For those involved in the distribution of the vaccines; For those working in other key frontline and emergency services; For those children and young people whose education has been disrupted, and for all those seeking to provide teaching both online and at home.

We remember as well all those whose livelihoods have been affected by the pandemic and who now face uncertain futures; And we particularly pray for all those who are suffering from the virus itself, as well as for those who are suffering through the impact of isolation, especially in cold and dark winter months.

Lord in Your Mercy

Hear our Prayer

We pray for this, our own, country with its cultural and ethnic diversity; For Queen Elizabeth, for our prime minister, for ministers of the government and for all who placed in positions of authority. We ask that they govern wisely and with due regard for the needs of all people. We pray for all people facing

this New Year without some of the basics of life that we take so much for granted. We think of the homeless, the unemployed, the asylum seeker, the addict, the ex-prisoner.

Lord Jesus who became a refugee from the oppression of Herod, be with all those who find themselves marginalised from our affluent society. Support all who work through state and voluntary agencies to relieve their hardship and restore dignity.

Lord in Your Mercy

Hear our Prayer

We pray for the world-wide Anglican church; And as we do we bring before you our diocese here in Worcester. We pray for our bishops, John and Martin; For our Archdeacons Robert and Nicki, and for our Rural Dean, Sarah. We pray also for Allison and for all church leaders, both ordained and lay, who seek to support and contribute to the Church's vision of service and witness across the Bredon Hill Group. We pray also for continued guidance and discernment as we proceed with the selection process for the position of second Incumbent to the Bredon Hill Group. Lord, may you prepare the heart and bring forward the person you are calling to support ministry, mission and the spreading of your Good News in this place.

Lord in Your Mercy

Hear our Prayer

We pray for all families within the church communities of Bredon Hill. Each one is made up differently and faces the normal ups and downs of family life in different ways. We remember that Jesus was born, nurtured and grew up in a family which would have known all the emotions that we know in ours. We pray that each family finds a place for that selfless love, revealed to us through the life, teachings and example of our Lord.

Lord in Your Mercy

Hear our Prayer

We pray for the sick, both at home and in hospital, or hospice. We think of the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes. And we pray for all who care to their needs, both professionally and in the family. Lord Jesus who responded to the needs of all those who had faith; comfort and sustain those who are in need of your grace at this time.

Lord in Your Mercy

Hear our Prayer

Finally, we pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones, whether recently or some time ago, and we remember especially those who have died as a result of the Corona virus, and those relatives who were unable to say a personal goodbye.

Let the knowledge of your resurrection in glory be comfort to all those who mourn, and may they know that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, a light which no darkness can quench.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

Requests for Prayers

If there is someone or something that you would like to pray for please email us at eckingtonvicarage@hotmail.com



Please continue to pray for the ill and isolated, frontline, hospital and medical staff and for all those who are in any kind of need. Please pray for all young people who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system, that they might direct their energy into alternative activities and flourish as unique individuals made in the image of God.

Those who are sick: Roy and Margaret Putnam, Richard Clements, Christopher Frith, Edward Bunn, Brian Bolam, Alison Edwards

We continue to pray for: Don Dufty, Percy and Sharon Blizzard, Jackie Pickford, Clive Hunt, Mary Doney

Those in residential care: Sheila Bigland-Gibbons, Barbara Milton, Rita Sheppy

Those who have died and their families: Simon Flynn, Doreen Byrd, Geoff Relph, Revd Margie Schutte, Carol Newman - a much loved and respected member of the Elmley village community - we pray for her husband Maurice and all their family and friends.

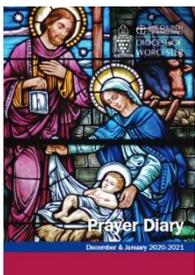
Anniversary of a death: Please pray for those who have lost loved ones this year

Church Services during Lockdown



On Tuesday afternoon following the Prime Ministers announcement, representatives from all the churches of the Bredon Hill Group met to discuss, via Zoom, whether we should continue with our current pattern of communal worship in the light of the escalating number of virus cases. It was therefore with a heavy heart that there was an almost unanimous agreement to suspend physical worship in our churches for the duration of the lockdown, deeming the risk to our communities as being too high if we continued to meet together. Therefore, from this Sunday Reverend Allison will

instead be leading Morning Prayer via Zoom at 10.30am. If you would like to join the service either by video or dialing in from your telephone; please contact Alison Khan at acbhteam@gmail.com or 07984 748059 who will send you the invite link.



News from the Diocese

Prayers and diocesan news can be found at www.cofe-worcester.org.uk

Reverend Allison Davies



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