



Praying Together



Hopes and Fears
January 2021

Dear Friends,

Well here we go again! I had not anticipated our first Prayer Letter of 2021 being written in a time of lockdown. However, with rising figures and fear of over-whelming the hospitals it became inevitable earlier this week that this would happen. As many of you will know we had already taken the difficult decision to suspend services for a while so as not to put anyone at risk unnecessarily. I am hopeful, however, that our churches will be allowed to remain open for private prayer. We know that God dwells within us and around us, but such peace and solice can be found within the walls of our church, and, to be able to go and sit quietly there when we need to, is a real blessing.

A lot has changed since our last lockdown, I do not wish to dwell too deeply on these things, but I am sure many of us have been changed by this experience and can think of negatives and positives in equal measure. In our service on Sunday we welcomed in the New Year with hopes and fears, this was before the announcement of lockdown obviously, but we could see the writing on the wall. We have hope in a vaccine and hope that at some point we will get through this, but we also fear for those most vulnerable amongst us for whom this virus is such a threat. Those who struggle with loneliness and isolation, those worried about finances and businesses, and those who are grieving are uppermost in our thoughts at this time.

On the 6th January, we celebrated the feast of the Epiphany, the time when the three Wise Men arrived at the stable to worship the Christ child. Those men from a different land, a different culture who somehow, through their studying of the sky, set off on a long journey. They followed a star which they believed would guide them to the place where the King of the Jews was to be born. They had even brought the presents with them such was their confidence. These wise men were pilgrims, setting off on a journey of discovery, not completely sure what they would encounter along the way. But they did find what they thought they would, although in an unexpected place, they trusted and allowed themselves to be guided on the journey. Maybe we too can allow ourselves to trust and be guided on our own journey this year, especially through these next few dark and difficult months. Trusting in the one who holds the whole world in his hands.

From the Bible: Matthew Chapter 2: verses 1-5 and 7-11

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet.' Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

For our prayers this week I am returning to our second Praying Together letter all those months ago. I feel the prayers are as relevant to us now as they were then.

Let us Pray:

Father, we hold to you this day the needs and concerns of the people of the Parishes of Marbury, Tushingam and Whitewell at these difficult and uncertain times. We pray that you keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy, in this time of uncertainty and distress.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love.

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour and to care for those in need. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful and those who mourn, to tend the sick and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love.

Gracious God, give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who care for others in whatever way. Be with those who are involved in any way with the vaccine. Strengthen them with your spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health.

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid, or in isolation
In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

As we follow once again the journey of the wise men, we ask that this New Year would be a new journey for us also, to seek again the wonder of the baby in the manger.

Ali, on behalf of St Michael's Church, Marbury