

# St Francis Weekly News for THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY The Baptism of Christ 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021



This newsletter may have come to you by email or through your letterbox, if you received it on paper but are happy to receive an email in future please email [deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com](mailto:deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com) If you know anybody else who would like this delivered or emailed please contact Deborah or Revd Janet: [revdjanetwyer@outlook.com](mailto:revdjanetwyer@outlook.com)

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

### IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT OUR SUNDAY SERVICES

Because of the increasing risk of infection we have taken the decision that access to the church building for Sunday worship will be restricted to those who cannot join in via our online worship.

If you would like assistance in respect of joining our YouTube worship channel or would like further information about how the restriction affects you, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Vicar: The Revd Janet Wyer 07368 832294

## EPIPHANY

Last Sunday we celebrated the arrival of the Magi [the wise men] and the beginning of the season of Epiphany.



Strictly speaking Epiphany begins on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, but to ensure that we get to celebrate this principal festival properly it is generally moved to the nearest Sunday.

[A principal festival is a Holy Day that is observed throughout the Church – for example Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day are all principal feasts]

Having enjoyed celebrating the arrival of the Magi this next Sunday we look at another important occasion in Jesus life and ministry when he was revealed as God's Son – his baptism by John the Baptist in the River Jordan.

As has been happening over the past few months the whole service will be broadcast live via our 'St Francis Heartsease YouTube' channel. We hope you will join us.

Apologies to those who were watching the live broadcast last Sunday – unfortunately technical issues meant that the transmission was cut off before the end of the service. Very sadly these kind of technical problems are beyond our control but we hope that they will prove to be a rare occurrence. Your patience is appreciated.



Piglet is very much enjoying being a part of the St Francis family and learning all about the Church Year. Epiphany with its golden crowns and exciting stories from the Bible is a big hit!

## THE BELLS ARE RINGING!

Well, one is anyway...

With the beginning of another lockdown and the reality that many people are again having to shield; St Francis is once again ringing out the reminder that the community is being held in prayer throughout the day and that God's love is with us always.

If you hear the bell – it means that prayers are being said for you; and please remember that no matter what is happening in our lives we are all precious in God's eyes and we are never alone.

The great news is that we now have a team of people helping with the ringing – listen out to see if you can hear the difference in the rings!



Brother Eeyore taking his turn in the bell tower

Incidentally, each ring should total 33 tolls of the bell [3 x 11] which is the number of years Jesus was with us on earth. It is a reminder that he is with us still in spirit and his blessing is always upon and around us.

## ASSISTANCE DURING WINTER LOCKDOWN

We extend our deep gratitude to those who have once again been contributing non-perishable foods and goods to St Francis Free Food.

This means that we have a small stock of food, toiletries and pet food that we can pass on to those who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you or someone you know is in need of a helping hand in respect of feeding themselves or their family.

24/7 answerphone: 01603 431259

Please leave your name and a contact number and we will return your call as soon as possible

Alternatively you may come to the church any weekday morning 10am – 12pm, there is always someone on the premises at this time.

## GET CREATIVE!

We are hoping that over the next few weeks we will be able to showcase artwork, poetry or other written material submitted by you!

If you have something that you would like us to consider for the newsletter please feel free to send via email [revdjanetwyer@outlook.com](mailto:revdjanetwyer@outlook.com) or post a copy of your submission through the vicarage door. [not the original please, we cannot guarantee its safe return]



# APPEAL

We had hoped to make a collection for East Anglia's Children's Hospices at our Christmas Services. Unfortunately as those were cancelled this collection did not go ahead.

We know how vital their work is and would like to give you an opportunity to help. If you would like to help please put your gift in an envelope labelled EACH, and post through the vicarage (100 Rider Haggard Road) door. If you supply name and contact details we will acknowledge receipt.

If you would like to contribute but cannot get to the vicarage please leave a message on the answerphone (01603 431259) and we will try to arrange for collection of your gift.



## TIER FOUR RESTRICTIONS

Access to the church building for Sunday worship is restricted to those unable to access online worship.

However, the church is open for individual prayer every weekday 10.30am – 11.30am.

If you would like to spend some time in the church please do feel free to contact either Revd Janet [07368 832294] or Fr Tracy [07834 845623] and we will do our best to assist you

If you would like to join in with Sunday Worship we continue to broadcast via the St Francis YouTube channel. Just search for 'St Francis Heartsease YouTube' !

## HOME GROUP

Jim Green will again be offering the opportunity for folk to get together via the St Francis Zoom Room every fortnight on a Wednesday evening.

The forthcoming dates are:

January 13, 27

February 10, 24

March 10, 24

As before the times are 7-8pm, and the format is very simple: chat, catch up with each other, read a Bible passage, pray for each other.

Please email Jim and he will forward on the zoom link address.

[jimpiecrust@gmail.com](mailto:jimpiecrust@gmail.com)

## NEIGHBOURHOOD NOTICE BOARD

I've just had a very helpful phone call from Bee who has reminded me that that although many shops and businesses are closed, most Opticians are open for eye tests and emergency repairs etc.

She also let me know that Poundland in Castle Mall is now closed and that the only bus stop open for the return journey to the Heartsease is the stop located in Rampant Horse Street.

Thank you Bee – we're very happy to pass on that information.

## PASTORAL CARE MATTERS

This new lock down and the news that the number of infections are rising might be too much for some of us to cope with in all sorts of ways. Please remember you are not alone, if you would like a chat, or if you need some assistance of any kind please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. We

are very happy to talk with you if that would be helpful.

If you live on the Heartsease we are also able to offer help if you or someone you know needs support with emergency basic food provision. Our contact details are as follows:

Revd Janet [07368 832294]

Father Tracy [07834 845623]

24/7 Answerphone: 01603 431259  
[checked daily]

There is also someone available in church weekday mornings if you would refer to talk to someone face to face.



## USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Childline: 0800 1111

Samaritans: 116 123

Domestic Violence Hotline: 0808 2000 247

[If you hear a neighbour in distress please do not hesitate to call this number or 999; you could save a life]

Mind: 0300 123 3393

Age UK: 0800 169 6565

Norfolk Assistance Scheme: **01603 223392**

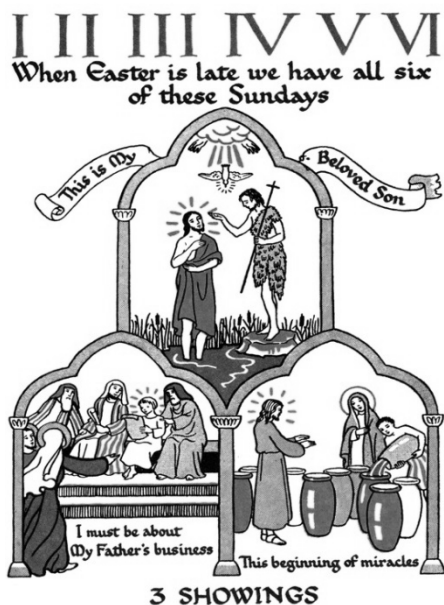
## THE CURATE'S CORNER

Those of you who pass the church may notice our new posters for the Epiphany season, taken from a book for children by the Norfolk artist Edith Chadwick.

The first picture shows the visit of the Magi to the birthplace of Jesus with their three gifts of gold frankincense and myrrh. The man



in the foreground has the frankincense which he is burning in a special device that he is swinging called a thurible. Some churches use these as part of their worship and it reminds us what frankincense is, a dried tree sap that forms into a resin and is burned to produce a sweet smell. It formed an important part of the rituals in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus and symbolises the worship which we devote to Christ. I love the little cat tugging at the Magi's rope belt, humbling his earthly kingship before the Lord!



The second picture reminds us that we are in the season of Epiphany and explains that there might be six Sundays to go before Lent, if Easter is late. This year, Easter is not so late and we will only have four of these Sundays before the run up to the season of Lent. The three pictures represent three important stories connected with the season.

We see from the first picture that Epiphany means 'showing', and indeed the feast is most closely associated with the visit of the Magi, and the 'showing' of the new born Christ to the world of the Gentiles, or the non-Jews. There are also other 'manifestations' which are considered to be important.

In the Eastern church, the feast of Epiphany is much more closely associated with the baptism of Christ as told in all four gospels, a story that we celebrate this Sunday. The other two traditional 'showings' are the finding of Jesus in the temple as told in Luke 2:41, and the turning of water into wine at the wedding in Cana as told in John 2.

The important thing to realise is that all these 'showings' demonstrate the true identity of Christ: he is the Son of God, the Messiah. He is fully human, but also fully divine; he is not simply a 'good man' or a 'teacher'; he is in himself a

'showing' of God to us, with whom we can choose to participate if we seek transformation and new life. That is the meaning of the gospel, the 'Good News': anyone can benefit from these ancient mysteries, and there is nothing secret or exclusive about them.

All are welcome. And that includes you.

Every blessing

Fr Tracy

#### A WORD FROM THE VICAR

So here we are again, staying at home as much as possible – being told not to meet with loved ones and friends who live in other households, and subject to so many restrictions and regulations.

This is the most difficult of times and quite possibly the most anxiety provoking time I have ever lived through.

But as I think on this I can't help but remember how I used to listen to my parents talking about their wartime experiences. I recall how I used to wonder how I would have coped with air raids and rationing and the bleak, bleak times that they described.

Thankfully I have never had to find out – and as I sit here in my comfortable home pondering on the restrictions that have been put in place to keep me and others safe I realise that actually, for many of us, life isn't as awful as it could be; as bad as it has been for people still with us who lived through the thirties, forties and early fifties for example.

Medical treatments and interventions have improved beyond all recognition since those days, and many diseases that carried off far too many are no longer the threat that they were.

How blessed we are to be living in the twenty first century with its mind boggling technology and wonderful scientific advances – how wonderful that we can trust in clever minds to find medicines and vaccines to treat threats to our physical wellbeing.

What is perhaps not so wonderful is the fact that too many folk no longer understand the spiritual comfort that can be found in having faith in God in times of trouble.

Although perhaps few talked about their faith in God, former generations leaned heavily upon the power of prayer and the comfort to be found in the pages of the Bible.

I suspect most of us oldies can think of a parent, grandparent or someone influential in our lives who

was quietly but deeply faithful to the teachings of Jesus.

In just a couple of generations we have lost so much – and I find that very saddening.

But what I find heartening is that in the midst of this latest crisis I am beginning to hear the stirrings of hearts and souls as many people I come in contact with begin to turn away from the madness of worldly ways and look to the deeper meanings of life as can be found in the teachings of Jesus.

The way of faith in Jesus Christ is not the easiest road to travel, but it is the way that leads to inner peace, contentment and the knowledge that when we belong to him we are children of God together and nothing in this world can ever overcome us. Not even Covid-19.

Jesus is indeed our Hearts ease.

Be blessed in the knowledge that you are a precious child of God, and you are held safe in his hands of love

## Revd Janet

### FOR OUR PRAYERS

We pray for those who are in acute need of prayer at this time: Russell; Huggy; Megan; Denise H; Christine; John P; Scott; Stephen C; Margaret T; David & Cynthia S; Maegan; Tom; Riley & his mum and family; Jeanette, David & Grace; Paula; Pete; Fr Brian; Hazel; Ben; Frazer.

We continue to pray for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Doreen; Rosemary; Sheila; John; Joy; Shirley.

We remember with love Janet Smith and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends.

Janet Smith's funeral service will be taking place at St Faith's Crematorium on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January. We continue to hold her family in prayer at this very sad and difficult time.

### A PRAYER FOR THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

God of compassion,  
be close to those who are ill, afraid or feeling isolated. 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.

### The Church of St Francis Heartsease

**Heavenly Father**  
**We ask your blessing upon us.**  
**Hold the Heartsease Community,**  
**and all the world,**  
**in your arms of love.**  
**Be with us.**  
**Give us your strength,**  
**peace, and healing grace.**  
**Watch over us,**  
**protect us from harm;**  
**and keep in safety**  
**all those who care for the sick**  
**and attend to our needs,**  
**in Jesus name we pray.**  
**Amen**

### PRAYERS FOR FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

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

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan  
you revealed Jesus as your Son:  
may we recognize him as our Lord  
and know ourselves  
to be your beloved children;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

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

## READINGS FOR FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

### GENESIS 1: 1 - 5



In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

### PSALM 29



Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ♦ **ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.**

Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; ♦ worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; ♦ **the Lord is upon the mighty waters.**

The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; ♦ **the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.**

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; ♦ **the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;**

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf ♦ **and Sirion like a young wild ox.**

The voice of the Lord splits the flash of lightning; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; ♦ **the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare; ♦ **in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'**

The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood; ♦ **the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.**

The Lord shall give strength to his people; ♦ **the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now,  
and shall be for ever. Amen

### ACTS 19: 1 - 7



While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland 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.

### 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.'



## REFLECTION FOR FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

### The Baptism of Christ

Today we mark the Baptism of Christ. Mark begins his story in a very abrupt fashion with the immediate introduction of John the Baptist. John was standing in the great tradition of the prophets, but in his case the message was slightly different. He is telling people to immerse themselves in water as a token of repentance for their sins.

This was unusual because while the purification laws in Leviticus prescribed washing as a way of getting rid of uncleanness, normally atonement for sin was by way of sacrifice. Baptism was not a Jewish practice, baptism (the word baptise means plunging something, or someone, into water) was reserved for proselytes, non-Jews who wanted to adopt the Jewish faith.

By encouraging Jews as well as Gentiles to be baptized John is saying that merely being a Jew was not sufficient to be put right with God, there was a need for a process of repentance and purification.

John's message was that something special was about to happen, and people needed to be ready for it. He says that people should turn away from the way they were living and treat everyone fairly, and he encourages them to demonstrate their willingness to do this by being baptised in the River Jordan.

The choice of the Jordan is very significant. It was through the waters of the Jordan that God had brought his chosen people of Israel safely to the promised land, after the Exodus. So for Israel the Jordan meant all the promise of a fresh start in a new land. The difference this time was that they would be plunged into the water rather than crossing it with dry sandals.

John attracted a large following, many accepted his challenge to be baptised and it would have been seen as:

- a re-enactment of the entry to the promised land
- a rite of purification
- an acceptance by the individual of the need to change
- a symbol of willingness to make those changes.

So John is merrily baptising away when he sees Jesus coming along. In Matthew's gospel John actually asks Jesus "are you sure you want to do this? Jesus replies that he wants to be baptised "to fulfil all righteousness". Given that John's baptism was an acknowledgement of sin, a sign of purification and an acceptance of the need for change, why should Jesus, the sinless son of God want to be baptised. I think there are several reasons.

Jesus was fully God, but also fully human. He therefore wanted to be identified with sinful humanity and baptism was part of that identification process. It was, perhaps, a demonstration of solidarity.

It marks the start of Jesus' public ministry. It was equivalent, to the laying on of hands that takes place at ordination, a visible sign that a new ministry has commenced.

The baptism was an act of commissioning, but it was also rather more than that. We are told that as Jesus came up out of the water the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and a voice was heard saying "You are my

son, the Beloved, with you I am pleased". The voice confirmed that Jesus was walking in the will of God and doing what God wanted. It was confirmation of what he knew already but it's always nice to receive formal public acknowledgement.

So the voice is God's seal of approval on Jesus' actions and his ministry. It also announces him publicly as the Son of God. It is, for those who were able and willing to hear, a clear statement that God's anointed Messiah had come, just as the prophets had promised.

Finally it represents a formal empowerment of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

So we have Jesus accepting baptism by John as his identification with sinful humanity, as commissioning for his ministry, approval by his heavenly Father, announcement of his status, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. What might this mean for us today?

Many of us were probably baptised as children. A few may have been baptised as adults. In either case promises were either made by us or on our behalf. For those baptised as infants the parents and godparents promise to pray for them and set them a Christlike example. They also promise that they will encourage them to be part of the community of faith.



from the countryside all around.

John shouted loudly, 'Someone else is coming. Someone more powerful than me. I am not important enough even to untie his shoes!' John said that although he baptized people with water, the one who was coming would be different. He would baptize people with the Holy Spirit.

Then one day he came. Jesus came from Nazareth to the River Jordan, to be baptized by John. And as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were torn apart and a dove came down; the Holy Spirit descended onto Jesus. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son. I love you and I am pleased with you.'

Common to all baptisms is the promise to renounce evil in all its forms, and a promise to receive Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

I think the fact that Jesus was himself baptised adds an extra dimension to this. It shows that he truly did enter into the whole range of human experience, and that should be a real encouragement to us.

It also affirms his status as the Son of God and that gives us confidence in him and in his power to redeem and save.

It shows that the Holy Spirit is available to all who turn to him and want to be his followers.

So at the start of this New Year, a year we are probably approaching rather fearfully after all the horrors of last year and the worries about the continuing spread of the virus, I think we should take encouragement from the fact that Jesus has shared our experience of baptism. I think that along with those who were baptised in the Jordan we should see it as an entry point into the new life and new land that God intends for his people and we should take courage from the promise that the Holy Spirit is available to all those who believe.

David 8Lechmere  
Lay Reader

**John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness.** He was a strange-looking man, clothed in a hairy camel skin, with a leather belt around his waist. And he ate strange things: locusts and wild honey.

John was announcing a message of forgiveness of sins if people repented and were baptized. People came from all over to be baptized by John in the River Jordan. They came from the city of Jerusalem and







Name \_\_\_\_\_

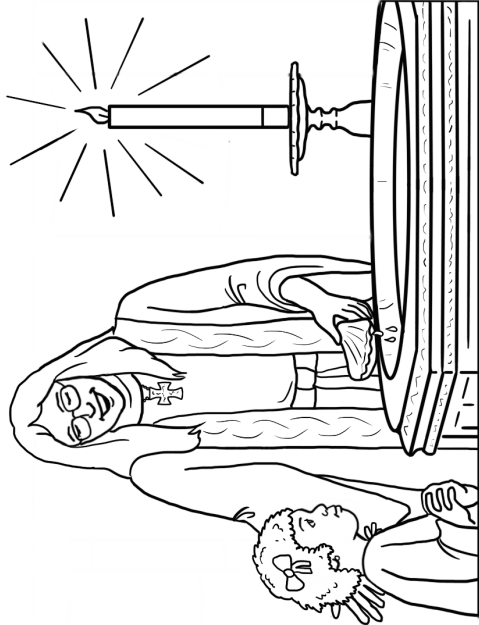
# ROOTS Activity Sheet

10-16 January 2021  
Baptism of the Lord



## Mark 1.4-11

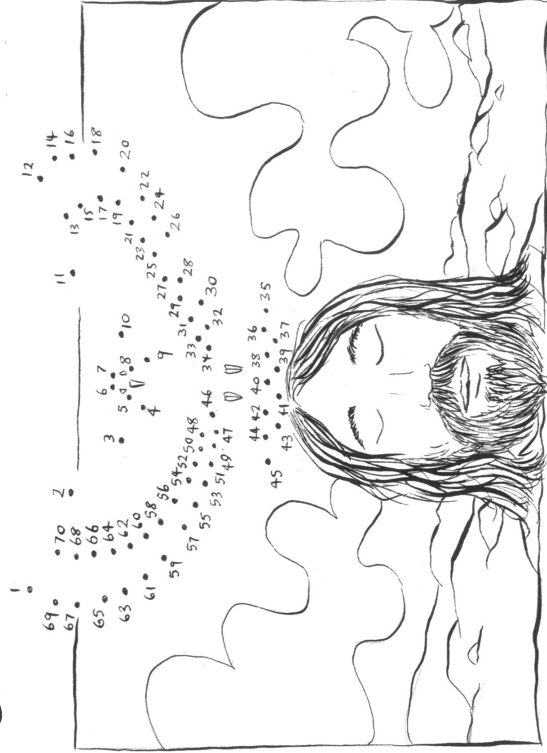
Jesus comes to the river Jordan to be baptized by John and everything changes; for him and for us.



Jesus was baptized in a river. Here is one place where people get baptized today. Find out where else people can get baptized today and draw those places below.



Join the dots to find out what happened to Jesus.



There are lots of symbols in the Bible passage today. Can you use them to solve a maths puzzle?

$$\text{Dove} + \text{Water} = 12$$

$$\text{Dove} + \text{Water} = 16$$



Can you change these letters to find words from today's story?

- etwar \_\_\_\_\_
- pitrSi \_\_\_\_\_
- seJus \_\_\_\_\_
- ptabezi \_\_\_\_\_
- vanshee \_\_\_\_\_
- seeplad \_\_\_\_\_