



Newsletter

4 & 11 January 2026



Feast of the Epiphany 6 January

Baptism of Christ 11 January

Services for Sunday 4 January 2026 Epiphany

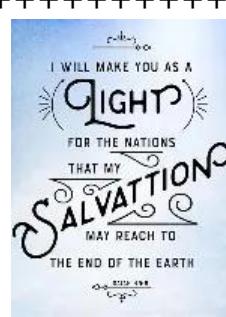
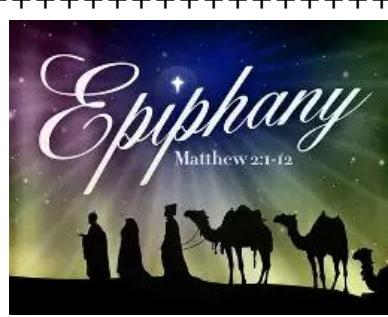
St Paul's 10am **All-Age Worship** - Revd Andy Smith and Anthea Darlington

St Andrew's 11am **Holy Communion** preside and preach: Revd Hilary Shedlock

Services for Sunday 11 January 2026 Baptism of Christ

St Paul's 10am **Holy Communion** preside and preach Revd Mike Dyson

St Andrew's 11am **Morning Praise** lead and preach Anthea Darlington



Readings for Sun 4 January

Isaiah 60: 1-6

(1) *Arise, shine, your light has come*

Matthew 2: 1-12

(2) *Wise men from the east*

Readings for Sun 11 January

Isaiah 42: 1-9

(3) *The Servant, a light to the nations*

Matthew 3: 13-end

(4) *Baptism of Jesus*

Wed 7 Jan: Psalm 72: 1,10-13; Mark 6: 45-52; Wed 14 Jan: Psalm 40:1-4,7-10; Mark 1:29-39



Epiphany - what exactly is it and what is its relationship to Christmas Day? Here are some facts (and opinions!) which help explain its significance and its importance for us.

What's the difference between Epiphany and Christmas? In the early church what mattered most was the revelation of who Christ was, rather than the actual date of his birth. This was celebrated on 6 January. Originally, Epiphany gathered together several important moments in Jesus' life: his birth, the visit of the Magi, his baptism in the Jordan River and his first miracle at the

wedding at Cana. All were understood as signs revealing Jesus's divine identity to the world. Epiphany was not the end of Christmas. It was Christmas. The celebration of Christmas on 25 December as Jesus' birthday developed during the 4th century once Christianity was a publicly recognised religion in the Roman Empire and dates started to be fixed- it's 9 months after the feast of the Annunciation and a time of traditional winter festivals. The Western church changed to 25 December but the Eastern church kept 6 January as the more important date.

What does the word 'Epiphany' mean? It comes from the Greek word "epiphaneia," meaning "appearance" or "manifestation." It signifies the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi. Who were the magi? Matthew's gospel calls them 'wise men' and doesn't specify a number: we think of three because they brought three gifts. They were not kings but possibly advisers to the king of the Parthian empire (Persia) from which area they might have come. Their role would be familiar to the people of Judea because during the exile in Babylon, young Jewish men like Daniel took on this role. One important thing they did was interpret dreams- and there are four dreams in Matthew's account of the nativity. Their names: Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar, come from an 8th century Greek manuscript.

How is Epiphany celebrated in different places? The Orthodox churches bless the waters and

people's houses on this day; in Spanish-speaking countries the children put their shoes out for sweets and there are processions; in France and Mexico special cakes are served; in Italy an old woman on a broomstick called La Befana delivers gifts to children; in Poland they have big parades led by three kings on horses (the wise men were more likely to have ridden horses than camels which were used for carrying goods not people in those days); in Germany special messages are chalked on doors. What's the difference between Epiphany and Twelfth Night? By the sixth century, the Western church officially designated the period between 25 December and 6 January as a single festive season. This is the origin of "the twelve days of Christmas", and as it ends on Twelfth Night that's when we take our Christmas decorations down. It was a time for entertainment- hence Shakespeare's play written for the end of Christmas in 1601.

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A prayer for the New Year: Heavenly Father, as the dawn of a new year breaks, we thank You for the gift of life, for the lessons of the past, and for the promise of what lies ahead. Fill our hearts with peace, our minds with clarity, and our days with purpose. Guide our steps so they follow the path of kindness, wisdom, and truth. Bless our loved ones with health, joy, and protection. When challenges arise, grant us strength; when blessings come, keep us humble. May this year be a season of growth, grace, and gratitude. Amen.

We pray for our dear friend Tony Bannister who died suddenly before Christmas and whose funeral is at St Sebastian's on 7 January; for Lynne Marsland who died this week; and for Pam Smeeton's mum who died on Christmas morning. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families and friends at this sad time.

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Christmas events Janet Wood writes: 'Thank you everyone! We have had some enjoyable social events and many lovely services over the Christmas period, all run by volunteers. Even our Ministers are volunteers. The Leadership Team work so hard at all times. A big 'thankyou' to them and to the 'army' of volunteers who work so willingly to keep our Church active and alive for all of us. We are very fortunate.'



Attendance on events was up on last year: St Andrew's was packed out for the Parish Family Carol Service with the girls' uniformed organisations; the choir singing was wonderful at the Festival of Lessons and Carols and every service over Christmas; Time Out Christmas lunch and the Ladies' Afternoon Tea were enjoyed by all who attended; the Nativity with a modern twist (Traitors) and brand new outfits was a huge success; the Christingle was a highly successful outreach event with many families present; and Christmas morning with Revd Lisa Battye and the inflatable stable was a treat for all.

Looking towards 2026: The Leadership Team would like your help with the Parish Profile which will be sent to applicants for the post of Rector which we hope to advertise soon. What do you think is good about St Paul's and St Andrew's? What are the challenges for the future? Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Write your opinions on sheets provided in church or speak to a member of the Leadership Team.

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Next 2 weeks

We hope to bring you news of the next Tuesday **Bible study** shortly- watch this space.

Wednesday 7 January: Morning Praise 10am with Anthea Darlington. **No coffee morning.**
Tony Bannister's funeral 10am at St Sebastian's.

Tuesday 13 January: Time Out 1.30pm Illustrated talk: In the bleak midwinter.

Wednesday 14 January: Holy Communion 10am with Revd David Cooper, Mission Community leader.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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For more information visit our websites:

St Paul's: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/15877
St Andrew's: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/15878