

The Parish of Louth and Deanery of Louthesk

Weekly notes and information for

3rd January 2021: Epiphany Sunday



www.teamparishoflouth.org.uk

In all we do, we seek to live out Jesus' command to draw close to the love of God in worship, and to share this by loving our neighbour



The Community Tree at St James

Collect Prayer at Daily Prayer during the week

O GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles: Mercifully grant, that we, which know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Our churches: opening as places for prayer and reflection in our communities

The Parish Church of Louth St James will be open for private prayer between **10am and 1pm**

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays

Please see pages 2 and 3 for details of other churches that are open for private prayer across the Deanery of Louthesk

DIARY OF PRAYER & WORSHIP THIS WEEK...

Services marked * are broadcast via www.facebook.com/louthchurch

Sunday 3rd	9 30am	Morning Service at Great Carlton
Epiphany Sunday	9 30am	Morning Service at Covenham
	10am	SUNG EUCHARIST at St James'* Psalm 72. [1-9] 10-15 Isaiah 60.1-6; Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12
	10am	Holy Communion at North Thoresby
	10am	Morning Service at Fulstow
	10am	Morning Service at Marshchapel
	10 30am	Morning Service at Grimoldby
	11 15am	Holy Communion at Legbourne
	6pm	PLAINSONG EVENSONG* Psalm 97; Isaiah 49.1-13; John 4.7-26
Monday 4th	9 15am	MATINS at St James'* Psalm 89.1-37; Isaiah 60.13-end; John 1.43-end
	10am	St James' open for private prayer until 1pm
	12 30pm	Funeral at Lincoln Crematorium
Tuesday 5th	9 15am	MORNING PRAYER at St James'* Psalm 48; Isaiah 61; John 2.1-12
	11am	HOLY COMMUNION at St James'*
	11 45am	Praying with the Bible (Lectio Divina) Go to: www.zoom.us/join or 'phone 0203 481 5240, and enter the Meeting ID: 847 0617 4009 and Password: 562604.
Wednesday 6th	9 15am	MATINS at St James'* Psalm 132; Isaiah 62; John 2.13-end
	10am	St James' open for private prayer until 1pm
	12 30pm	FUNERAL at St James'
	12 30pm	Outreach Post Office at Fotherby Church, which is also open for private prayer 'til 2 30pm
	7 30pm	COMPLINE online from Legbourne Rectory*
Thursday 7th	9 15am	MATINS at St James'* Psalm 99; Isaiah 63.7-end; 1 John 3
	11am	Mass at St Michaels
Friday 8th	9 15am	MATINS at St James'* Psalm 46; Isaiah 64; 1 John 4.7-end
	10am	St James' open for private prayer until 1pm
Saturday 9th	10am	St James' open for private prayer until 1pm
	11am	Marshchapel open for private prayer 'til 12 noon
	12 30pm	MIDDAY PRAYER at St James'*

Sunday 10th	10am	SUNG EUCHARIST at St James’*
Baptism of Christ		Psalm 29 Genesis 1.1-5; Acts 19.1-7; Mark 1.4-11
	10am	Morning Service at North Thoresby
	10am	Morning Service at Utterby
	10am	Holy Communion at Welton le Wold
	10 30am	Morning Service at Grimoldby
	10 30am	Holy Communion at Manby
	11am	Holy Communion at Ludborough
	11am	Holy Communion at North Somercotes
	11 15am	Matins at Legbourne
	3pm	Holy Communion at Fotherby
	6pm	PLAINSONG EVENSONG* Psalm 46; Isaiah 42.1-9; Ephesians 2.1-10

JOINING IN WORSHIP

All our worship is being streamed on the Parish of Louth facebook page. You do not need a Facebook account to view these services – just click on ‘Not now’ when it asks you to sign up.

www.facebook.com/louthchurch/live

 Watch Louth CofE Services as live streams (and previously recorded) on Facebook. No account needed

DETAILS OF CHURCHES OPEN

Binbrook: Please ‘phone the keyholder on 07778 316486 for access

Covenham: Please ‘phone the Churchwarden on 01507 363508 for access.

Fulstow: closed, except for scheduled services.

Fotherby: The Outreach Post Office is open on Wednesdays from 12.30pm to 2.30pm

Great Carlton: Please ‘phone the Churchwardens on 01507 328369 or 450527 for access

Grimoldby: Please ‘phone the churchwarden on 01507 328917

Louth, St James: Monday to Saturday, 10am to 1pm.

Ludborough: Please ‘phone the churchwarden on 01472 840505 for access.

Manby: Please ‘phone the churchwarden on 01507 327199 for access.

Marshchapel: Open 11am to 12 noon each Saturday throughout November

North Thoresby: Please ‘phone a churchwarden on 01472 840698 or 840160 for access.

Utterby: Please ‘phone the churchwarden on 07802 182756 for access

WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR USE AT HOME

A range of spiritual resources remain available across the deanery as follows:

- **Parish of Louth on Facebook:**
All services are being streamed on Facebook Live (you do not need to be a registered facebook user):
<https://www.facebook.com/louthchurch>
- **Parish of Louth website:**
Downloadable resources (including this leaflet), an uploaded broadcast of Sunday Eucharist from St James, and regular video meditations:
www.teamparishoflouth.org.uk
- **Deanery of Louthesk: The Confraternity of St Herefrith**
Video and other prayer resources will be available from the confraternity's website, including a regular meditations by members of the clergy serving the Deanery of Louthesk.
<https://herefrith.org/confraternity-resources/video/>
- **'Praying with...'**
Online sessions, available live via Zoom (see Parish Notes for details) or as a video on the Parish of Louth facebook page.
- **St Andrew's Stewton Church Community** welcomes everyone. Since March 2020 we have produced an email 'Post' every Sunday morning to sustain the life of our church community on-line. You can access these Posts via the web site www.standrewsstewton.co.uk or have your email address added to our circulation list on request to windhover22@live.co.uk



An Order of Service for the Eucharist this Sunday

- *We open our hearts to God, that we might be transformed by his love*
- *We listen to God's Word, and seek to find out how we may grow to understand God's will for us more fully*
- *We gather around the table to share a symbolic meal, a meal that joins us with our brothers and sisters throughout the world; the saints who have lived in all times and places*
- *We pray that we go out as lights that shine with God's love wherever we might go*

The Gathering

The GREETING and PREPARATION

In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Together we pray...

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

As the Ministers enter, organ music may be played or a psalm sung.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

The PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

A Minister introduces the Prayers of Penitence.

The grace of God has dawned upon the world through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own. Let us confess our sins.

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**

The Priest pronounces Absolution.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw you to himself and cleanse you from all your sins, that you may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

We say the GLORIA, a Song of Praise written by the early Christians

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

**Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.**

Amen.

The COLLECT prayer

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; 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.

The Liturgy of the Word

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 60.1-6

A reading from the book of Isaiah. Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

New Testament Reading: Ephesians 3.1-12

A Reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians. This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 2.1-12

Reader: Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew. All: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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: `And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Reader: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

There will be a HOMILY and period for reflection, after which the service continues with the NICENE CREED:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

The INTERCESSIONS, which may include the following bidding and response:

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

And may end with:

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers,

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The PEACE

Our Saviour Christ is the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

A CHANT may be sung, as the altar is prepared.

PREPARATION OF THE TABLE

The prayer at this point may include the following response:

Blessed be God for ever.

The EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord be with you.

and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

The president praises God for his mighty acts, ending with:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

The president recalls the Last Supper, after which the following acclamation may be used:

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

The Prayer continues and leads into the doxology, to which all respond boldly

Amen.

We sit or kneel for the LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The BREAKING OF THE BREAD

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ

Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread.

The GIVING OF COMMUNION

God's holy gifts for God's holy people.

Jesus Christ is holy, Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The AGNUS DEI

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, grant us peace.

Communion is distributed.

The PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION.

The priest leads the congregation in prayer:

Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek: may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light discern the glory of your presence in your Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Following this prayer, all join in:

We thank you, Lord, that you have fed us in this sacrament, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all peoples.

Amen.

The Dismissal

We stand, and the priest proclaims God's BLESSING and we are sent into His world...

Christ our Lord, to whom kings bowed down in worship and offered gifts, reveal to you his glory and pour upon you the riches of his grace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

We stand as the Ministers leave.

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Matins and Evensong: An Order of Service

*If used in the context of a family or household the words in **bold** are said by all. If said alone, all words are spoken by the individual praying.*

Along with this order of service you will need a Bible for the psalm and readings. Details of which psalm and readings to use are found on page 2.

If the service forms the only, or the main, act of worship on a Sunday in a parish church, then the Minister calls on everyone to reflect on those things that distance us from God and, after a pause for reflection, we join in the Prayer of Confession, which is followed by a prayer of absolution or forgiveness:

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, that confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

At other time the service may be begin with the opening responses:

O Lord, open thou our lips.

And our mouths shall shew forth thy praise.

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Praise ye the Lord.

The Lord's name be praised.

The Word of God

*Say or recite the **Venite, Exultemus Domino** (Psalm 95, at Matins) and the appointed **Psalm(s)**.*

The Psalm(s) end with the 'Gloria patri':

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

*A Reading from **The Old Testament**. (See page 2 for details)*

*Say or sing the **Canticle**; either the **Benedictus** (at Matins) or **Magnificat** (at Evening Prayer):*

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his people; And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us: in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets: which have been since the world began; That we should be saved from our enemies: and from the hands of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our forefathers: and to remember his holy covenant; To perform the oath which he sware to our forefather Abraham: that he would give us; That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies: might serve him without fear; In holiness and righteousness before him: all the days of our life.

And thou child shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people: for the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God: whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us; To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death: and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name. And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations. He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away. He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.-

*A Reading from **The New Testament**. (See page 2 for details)*

*At Evening Prayer, we also say the **Nunc Dimittis**:*

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation; Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

The Creed

You may wish to stand to say the Apostles' Creed:

**I believe in God the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth:
and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead and buried.
He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church;
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

The Prayers

The Lesser Litany, Lord's Prayer and Prayers:

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.

And grant us thy salvation.

O Lord, save the Queen.

And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness.

And make thy chosen people joyful.

O Lord, save thy people.

And bless thine inheritance.

Give peace in our time, O Lord.

**Because there is none other that fighteth for us,
but only thou, O God.**

O God, make clean our hearts within us.

And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

These Prayers end with one or more Collects for the Day (see the front over) and the following morning or evening Collects:

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day; defend us in the same with thy mighty power; and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance, to do always that is righteous in thy sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both, our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that, by thee, we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Amen.

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

A time for Reflection

After any further prayers, there may be a time for reflection including the singing of an anthem. If using this material at home, you may find this a good time to play a piece of recorded music or listen to one of the podcasts/video meditations.

The Conclusion

*The service ends with either a **Blessing**, or by praying the **Grace**:*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us now and evermore. **Amen.**

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THIS WEEK'S PSALM AND HOMILY

Psalm 72. [1-9] 10-15

GIVE the King thy judgements, O God : and thy righteousness unto the King's son.

2 Then shall he judge thy people according unto right : and defend the poor.

3 The mountains also shall bring peace : and the little hills righteousness unto the people.

4 He shall keep the simple folk by their right : defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong-doer.

5 They shall fear thee, as long as the sun and moon endureth : from one generation to another.
6 He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool : even as the drops that water the earth.
7 In his time shall the righteous flourish : yea, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.
8 His dominion shall be also from the one sea to the other : and from the flood unto the world's end.
9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before him : his enemies shall lick the dust.
10 The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents : the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts.
11 All kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall do him service.
12 For he shall deliver the poor when he crieth : the needy also, and him that hath no helper.
13 He shall be favourable to the simple and needy : and shall preserve the souls of the poor.
14 He shall deliver their souls from falsehood and wrong : and dear shall their blood be in his sight.
15 He shall live, and unto him shall be given of the gold of Arabia : prayer shall be made ever unto him, and daily shall he be praised.

Homily

Countless folk hear John's Prologue read at Carol Services. It is also the traditional gospel for the Eucharist on Christmas Day. Carol services do not usually have sermons and preachers on Christmas morning usually avoid doctrinal or exegetical sermons. Stories seem much more accessible to many who attend Christmas services. Its appearance in the lectionary on the 2nd Sunday of Christmas might provide an opportunity for a more extended treatment. While others will take advantage of the permission to celebrate the Epiphany (another good story!) today there is much to be gained from exploring the opening of John's Gospel further.

Today's readings give two great reflections on the mystery of the incarnation: the Prologue of St. John's Gospel and the opening prayer of praise from the Letter to the Ephesians (1.3-14). One expresses theology in poetry the other in the language of liturgy which has a similar quality. In his "The Scaffolding of the Spirit" Alan Ecclestone, a priest deeply immersed in literature as well as scripture, suggested that we treat the whole of John's Gospel as poetry. Poetry is not for speed-reading. It calls for a long slow reflective and ruminative approach. The same is true of liturgy. It is meant to be repeated memorised internalised. There is an echo of this in the way the Church celebrates great festivals like Christmas and Easter over an extended period which allows for exploration of complex mysteries which cannot be reduced to slogans or strap lines.

But preachers must preach so how might we approach these texts? Both locate what happens in Christ and in us in the context of God's eternal plan for his creation. Ephesians speaks of God making known to us "the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ..." Mysteries, a theologian reminded his pupils, are to be explored not solved. What does John say about God and Christ?

"No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who is close to the Father's heart who has made him known." In the Word made flesh we are enabled to see the God whom we cannot see of ourselves. If we would know what God is like then we must look to Jesus. John speaks of the glory of Christ and we should remember that in his gospel Christ is glorified on the cross. The Prologue's "In the beginning..." echoes the beginning of creation in Genesis. Ephesians speaks of God's "plan for the fullness of time to gather up all things in him things in heaven and things on earth." In Christ God unites himself with his creation in order to bring it to a fulfilment which involves the whole material world. In that plan human beings have a place and role as the adopted children of God those who Ephesians says "might live for the praise of his glory."

Those churches which have St. John the Evangelist as a patron will, this Sunday, hear the very end of John's Gospel. That 'epilogue' speaks of Peter and the 'disciple whom Jesus loved'. In John's account of the last supper, he "lay close to the breast of Jesus" just as Jesus in the Prologue "is close to the Father's heart." The beloved disciple is a pattern of discipleship for us. If we would know God do the Father's will obey Jesus' command to "Follow me" live as God's children then we must needs stay close to him listening to his words beholding his glory. So at this time of resolutions when we might commit ourselves to some course of action in the service of Christ and of others we should resolve to examine our prayer life as well. For without that loving contemplative attention to Jesus our activity can become nothing more than a busyness which is more about us than it is of Christ. John writes "The law was given through Moses grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." These notes come to you through another Moses but grace and truth still come through Jesus Christ.

NOTES AND NOTICES

- If you brought in a decoration for the Community Christmas Tree and would now like it back, we will be taking our trees down after Epiphany (6th January). So do pop in that week and pick your decorations up if you would like to do so.
- At some point this month Arabella, James and Aubrey will be moving into the Rectory. This is a temporary, pragmatic move until the appointment of a permanent Rector. It is hoped this will make their lives a little easier and enhance their availability for the Parish! James continues as Rector of Legbourne Woldmarsh and Rural Dean; Arabella as Assistant Curate.
- A thank you from Arabella, James & Aubrey to everyone from whom they received Christmas greetings: every single one is much appreciated. They would also like to share with the parish some seasonal news! They are expecting a baby, due in July, a long-awaited addition to their family. Please keep them, and their little one, in your prayers.
- There comes a time when it gets too much dealing with difficult emotional problems by yourself and that's when we are here to help. A new counselling Service is available to provide a non-judgemental, approachable support service to people who are in need of emotional and psychological support during times of difficulty, confusion or hardships to improve their well-being and quality of life. For an appointment please phone the Trinity Centre on 01507 605803 or email greg.gilbert@teamparishoflouth.org.uk

In our prayers this week...

All those affected by the current pandemic

The Sick and those in need: Marguerite Baillie, Peggy Baillie, Anne-Marie Bidwell, Helen Blakey, Paul Clifford, Ed Cox, Hildegard Dettmer-Beecroft, Rosemary Huke, Derwent Levick, Fr James Drayton, Christina Livesey, Roly Livesey, Mal Locking, Anna Mamwell, Mary Oxley, Alan Pounds, Sylvia Pounds, Eileen Robinson, Tracey Russell, Enid Spicer, Joyce Terrett, John Troughton, Charles Wakeley, Pauline Watson, Stuart Watson

Those who have died: Eileen Potts, Marion Chapman, John Myers, Shirley Ward, Jean Davey, Phyllis Strickland, Barbara Cowper, Jeanne Osborne, Keith Atherton, June Malkinson, Jean Hunter, Robin Leak, Dorothy Odlin, John Lomas

PARISH AND DEANERY CONTACTS

At this time, if you are aware of anyone in urgent pastoral need please e-mail louthparishpastoral@gmail.com or 'phone 07500 965321 or 07734 871159.

Deanery Office 01507 610247

louthesk@lincoln.anglican.org

For Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals
and other enquiries

Trinity Centre 01507 605803

trinity@teamparishoflouth.org.uk

For matters relating to activities at Trinity Centre

Safeguarding concerns 01507 610752

For information about how to respond to safeguarding concerns,
or for sources of support, please see Safeguarding Notices in church porches
www.teamparishoflouth.org.uk