



# Stour Vale Benefice

Seven Churches, One Body, One Benefice

## Newsletter No.297

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

9:15am Parish Communion Todber  
10:00am Morning Worship West Stour (CW)  
11:00am Parish Communion East Stour

**Please remember all who are ill or bereaved in Sunday's intercessions and in your prayers this week**

All who are ill, especially Joyce (ES), Irene (KM), Peter (KM), Nicky (T), Margaret (WS) and Tony (WS); for the family and friends of John Score (KM), Jeremy Seavers (T), Maureen Richards (formerly SP) and all those who are bereaved.

### *Other Benefice services/events coming up in January*

**Every Wednesday** – Said Holy Communion 10:30am East Stour Church

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup>** – Service in the Pub 11:00am for 11:15am start

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup>** – Knit and Natter 2:30pm East Stour Village Hall

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>** – Benefice Lunch 12:30pm Udder Farm

**Friday 30<sup>th</sup>** – Stour Vale Benefice prayer Group 2pm East Stour Church



### **Readings Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January**

Isaiah 60.1–6

Ephesians 3.1–12

### *Epiphany*

Psalm 72.10–15

Matthew 2.1–12

### **Ephesians 3.1–12 (NIV)**

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

<sup>2</sup> Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,

<sup>3</sup> that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. <sup>4</sup> In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. <sup>10</sup> His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, <sup>11</sup> according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup> In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

## **Matthew 2.1-12 (NIV)**

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

### **Collect and Post Communion for Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January**

#### **Collect**

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.

#### **Post Communion 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.

### ***Prayer in the Benefice – Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January***

Please join us in prayer this week, either by adding the topics to your usual daily prayers or by praying the specific prayers suggested below. If you would like us to pray for something, or someone, then please contact Jill Perry ([octavoeditorsvb@gmail.com](mailto:octavoeditorsvb@gmail.com)).

### ***Sunday: Benefice Events: Services this week, Churchwardens and PCC members***



Gracious Father, please bless all the services in our Benefice this week. This Epiphany may we recommit ourselves to seeking you, as did the Wise Men. Please guide and inspire all our churchwardens and PCC members to know your will for our churches and our Benefice this coming year, and give them the ability and the resources to do that will. Amen.

### **Monday: World Leaders**

Sovereign Lord, guide the leaders of the world into the ways of peace and righteousness. Bless those who administer the law, that they may uphold justice, honesty and truth. We pray especially for our own Government, Local Authorities, and all those in positions of power over us, that they may have integrity and wisdom, to act for the good of all and to protect the vulnerable in our society. Amen.

### **Tuesday: Todber**

Lord Jesus, We pray for the village community: for the relationships between neighbours, that they may support those in need. For the businesses and farms, that they may prosper and have a positive impact on the community and the environment. May your presence be tangible in all that happens in the village, your light shine into dark places, your glory be revealed and may your will be done. Amen.



**Wednesday: All who are ill or bereaved, especially those listed on the first page of the newsletter we have specifically been asked to pray for; the housebound, hospitalised or in care homes.**



Merciful Father, we pray for those who are struggling, especially the sick, the bereaved, the housebound, those in hospital, and those in care homes. Surround the frightened with your tenderness; befriend the lonely; give strength to those in pain; give them all comfort, joy and patience. Amen.

### **Thursday: The Worldwide Church**

Almighty God, we ask your blessing on your church, throughout the world and of all denominations. Give us boldness in proclaiming your Good News, humbleness in mission, unity, peace and joy. May all your people be equipped to fulfil their calling and show your love to all they meet. Amen.



### **Friday: Teachers – A Prayer from Compassion UK:**

Rabbi, Teacher, we lift up to you all teachers and educators, recognizing the invaluable role they play in shaping lives. Bless them abundantly for their tireless efforts, patience, and dedication. Grant them the strength to continue moulding young minds with wisdom and compassion. May they find fulfilment in their noble profession and know that their work is appreciated. Amen.

### **Saturday: Ourselves – A Prayer from the Church of England:**

O God, our light and our salvation, illuminate our lives, that we may see your goodness in the land of the living, and, looking on your beauty, may be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*By the Revd Roy Shaw, a retired but active priest in the diocese of York, where he is a spiritual director.*

### **Epiphany!**

You probably know from tales of Greek mythology that gods and goddesses would often appear out of nowhere in ancient Greece to beguile or trick mortals. The word for this in everyday Greek was 'epiphany'; - the appearance or manifestation of a divine being on earth to humans. For Christians Epiphany is the season after the 12 days of Christmas.

Our Epiphany Bible readings tell of the 'manifestation' of Jesus to a wider audience than those in the Christmas stories. We mark this in the first instance by placing the Wise Men in the crib scene; they have now arrived to see the consummation of their hopes and travels in the infant

Jesus. And our Epiphany readings usually continue through the season with Jesus' baptism; John the Baptist's witness to Christ; Jesus' family attempting to take charge of Him because of His popularity with the crowds; and the Presentation in the Temple. In all these, something of divine glory is being made manifest.

In more common parlance today, an epiphany means a sudden or blinding realisation ('I had a sudden epiphany that John was going to marry Celia'). That modern meaning is helpful; 'Gosh, epiphanies can be part of *our* Christian experience!' Remember that occasion we were so conscious of God's love holding us? Or the time we knew the words we used to that stranger were infused with a grace we didn't know we had? These and similar experiences which we've probably all had can be seen as *our* epiphanies- a time when God was made manifest to us (and possibly through us) in a distinct way.

Have you ever thought of those sorts of experiences as an epiphany? Not ring-fenced to a particular time of year, but part of our everyday experience, as we seek to live out our baptism promises, and follow Jesus through the ups and downs, the humdrum and the extraordinary, the joys and sorrows of the everyday.

The promise and reality of Christmas is 'Emmanuel-God with us'. And the reality of Epiphany is that God *IS* with us, in the everyday realisation of how great God is, how much God loves us, and how God pours upon us grace after grace after grace.

May we have many epiphanies in 2026, and may they all bring us closer to the God who has chosen in His love to reveal Himself to us.

*Parish Pump*

### **Smile Lines - Up and down**

A psychiatrist was training some young clergy who were interested in doing counselling. Deciding to test them, she asked: "How would you diagnose someone who visits your church, walks back and forth, screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, and then collapsing in a pew to weep uncontrollably the next?"

A young man at the back of the room raised his hand and ventured: "A football coach?"

*Parish Pump*

You can contact Revd Clare on: 01747 838171

Or by email: [clare@evzone.co.uk](mailto:clare@evzone.co.uk)

**Please Note:** Clare will be on Retreat Monday 5<sup>th</sup> to Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January



### **This Newsletter**



We hope you find this newsletter helpful. If you know of anyone who would like to join the mailing list, tell them to send their name, parish and email address to Jill Perry at [octavoeditorsvb@googlemail.com](mailto:octavoeditorsvb@googlemail.com) with the subject "Newsletter Mailing List". But, if you do not wish to continue receiving them, please email her with "Unsubscribe" in the subject field.

Follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089949903748](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089949903748)  
or search for 'The Church of England in the Stour Vale' on Facebook,  
or follow the link on the Benefice Website.

*Newsletter produced on behalf of the Stour Vale Benefice:*  
Buckhorn Weston – East Stour – Fifehead Magdalen  
Kington Magna – Stour Provost – Todber – West Stour

