

## Virtual Church News

17 January 2021

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please email [stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com) or call Jacqui on 356993.

### Message from Rev Eric Lomax

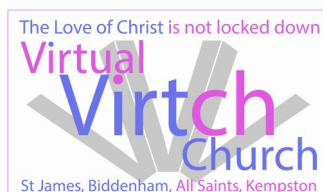
You would have been lucky to find an apple tree in Eden. The symbol of Eve, pale and blond, eating an apple from the tree of knowledge is a European theatrical concept, while the dark skin of children exploring a garden in innocence is closer to the narrative of Genesis. They hide the nakedness of that innocence by stitching together fig leaves, and figs were clearly the fruit of that tree. To be beneath the fig tree was, therefore, the symbol of beginnings at the birth of humanity.

Creation is a common theme of the 4th Gospel. John 1 begins with the same words expressed on the first page of Hebrew Scripture; 'In the beginning.' At the end of the first chapter of John, Jesus' birth place, Nazareth, is brushed aside as meaningless in the simple story of one believer (Philip) telling his friend Nathanael about Jesus. This is so far apart from the narratives of Matthew and Luke, who hold on to the human lineage of Christ, painting Jesus as the successor to Israel's kings, born a Nazarene with human parents and divine intervention.

Nathanael, in our story, responds to his meeting with Philip by saying, 'Can anything good come from Nazareth?' The writer of the fourth Gospel for his skill at irony, would, even in the 21st century, make an interesting dinner guest, because he never wastes a single word. *continued on next page*

### Virtch

Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



### Services in Church

I know that this has been a very difficult time you, and I find it very sad that we have not been able to meet together for Public worship. Given the current circumstances, and the dangers posed by the new strain of COVID 19, it is felt that we should continue our worship online for the time being. Although we are legally able to open, we have been encouraged by Bedford Borough Council, and supported by the senior clergy in the decision to remain closed (as a high proportion of other parishes have chosen to do). Please contact me if you would like a chat over anything at all. My numbers are 01234 328452 and 07805879537. God bless

Eric

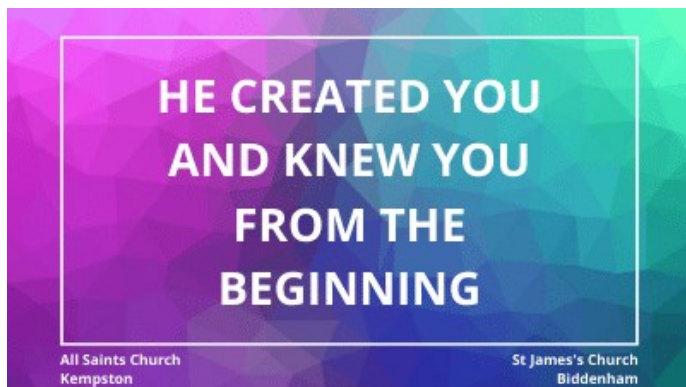
### A Reading for the Week

#### John 1:43-end

<sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' <sup>44</sup>Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' <sup>46</sup>Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' <sup>48</sup>Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' <sup>49</sup>Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' <sup>50</sup>Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' <sup>51</sup>And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

## Message from Rev Eric Lomax *continued*

So, Nathanael goes to meet this Jesus with expectant prejudice of the kind of provincial simpleton that he would expect from somewhere like Nazareth. Imagine the assumptions made by a London barrister arranging to meet a Yorkshire man or a Scouser, but things are never what they seem.



Remember, John places this provincial simpleton at the beginning of creation (In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, John 1:1). Jesus was neither an Israelite nor a simpleton, but was rather a citizen of the Godhead. He had simply passed through Nazareth on his divine journey through eternity. (The Word became Flesh and lived amongst us, full of grace and truth, John 1:14)

Here, the author of the 4th Gospel, the great storyteller, nails the identity of God's incarnate Word; inviting a response, Jesus calls Nathanael a genuine and honest Israelite (John 1:47). Integrity and purity are the key implications of this, and it indicates, in a tiny sentence, the deepest knowledge of somebody.

The wall of Nathanael's prejudice crumbles around him; 'How do you know so much about me?' and Jesus answers in a way that penetrates history; 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.'

We go back to creation. We go back to the beginning and find, again, the symbol of childhood and innocence, and this provincial religious nutter who was called the Nazarene, is no nutter at all, nor does he come from Nazareth.

He has just revealed that he knew Nathanael, as he knows us; before we responded to his call and before we were formed in our Mother's womb. A knowledge and a love that has been there since the foundations of the world. He created you and knew you from the beginning, when you were sat beneath the fig tree in Eden, as he loves you and knows you now. (Jeremiah 1:5)

God Bless

Eric

### Please pray with me

Jesus Christ

You are our Lord,

present from the start of creation.

Keep us faithful

and guide us as faithful witnesses

to your love.

Amen



### Please include in your prayers

- Countries which are unable to benefit from the Covid vaccines, due to debt, conflict etc.
- The NHS and all those involved in the UK vaccine roll-out.

### Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom.

Everyone welcome.

Contact us for login details or if you have any prayer requests.



## Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

### Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email [help@biddenham.org.uk](mailto:help@biddenham.org.uk) with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email [help@biddenham.org.uk](mailto:help@biddenham.org.uk)

### Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695

## Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 17 January

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. I will sing with the Spirity, from All Saints Leighton Buzzard.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Faith in Action.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from the Chapel of Merton College, Oxford.

Wednesday 20 January

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong. Choral Vespers from the Church of the London Oratory.

## Suggested Music for this week

Lord of all hopefulness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8mti7VL3gg>

Hail to the Lord's anointed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkrepBvrlI4>

I, the Lord of sea and sky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

Lead me, Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLtlylXJ3V4>

## Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044** Available 24 hours a day.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

## Discovery Group

This bible study group meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings at 8pm. For further details, contact [john.c.lambert@gmail.com](mailto:john.c.lambert@gmail.com)

## For the Children (& young at heart!)

This week we are looking at John 1:43-51. In the reading Jesus asks Philip to follow him. Philip is quite excited about this and calls Nathanael, but Nathanael is not sure. Philip was disappointed with Nathanael's reaction but suggested he 'come and see'. So reluctantly Nathanael joined them and was surprised when Jesus seemed to already know him. Jesus told him that one day he would see heaven open and the Son of Man coming in glory with angels around him.

### Activity

This story was full of emotions (for example, Philip was excited; Nathanael was unsure). Can you draw some emotion faces of all the emotions within the story?



Think about somebody, perhaps someone you live with, or a friend at school, who you could invite to 'come and see' Jesus.

### Song

Nobody's a nobody

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxID0LKvWpw>

### Prayer

Dear Lord, we pray to a God who wants to give, that we will see goodness in unlikely places; that we will bring God's welcome to those that need a friend or a home; that we will have our feet on the ground but our hearts open to heaven and to God's gifts. Amen.

*Resources from Roots.*

## Bedford Foodbank

Sadly we have decided we cannot currently continue to collect items for the Foodbank in the St James's Church porch, as it is too much of a risk to those who then take the items on to the Foodbank.



At this time we would ask that you make donations at the supermarket or by way of a financial donation. Further details can be found on their website: <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

## Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: [Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com](mailto:Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com)