

**All Saints Church, Kempston  
St James's Church, Biddenham**

## **Virtual Church News**

**9th January 2022**

**The Baptism of Christ  
1st Sunday of Epiphany  
(2nd Sunday)**

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 call Jacqui on 0778 6886 710 or email her at stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

### **Our Normal Sunday Services**

#### **1st Sunday of the month**

- 8.00am Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion at All Saints  
9.30am Joint All Age Service (followed by said Holy Communion) at St James's

#### **2nd Sunday of the month**

- 9.30am **Morning Worship at St James's**  
10.00am **Holy Communion Service at All Saints**  
6.00pm **Service of Evening Prayer at St James's**

#### **3rd Sunday of the month**

- 8.00am Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion at All Saints\*  
9.30am Holy Communion Service at St James's  
7.00pm Revive: Coffee/Bible/Fellowship

#### **4th Sunday of the month**

- 9.30am Morning Worship at St James's  
10.00am Holy Communion Service at All Saints

#### **5th Sunday of the month (when there is one)**

- 9.30am Service at St James's  
6.30pm Sung Evensong at St James's

We also hold online services during the week via Zoom at 9.00am on Monday and 6.00pm on Wednesday. To join these Zoom services, simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.

We hope you will join us at our services as we explore a mixture of both traditional and new ways of worship.

### **Revive - 3rd Sundays**

A short act of worship over a coffee, then unfolding the scriptures together. 7.00pm in St James's Church Barn. Everyone invited.



### **Reading for the Week**

**Luke 3.15-17, 21-22**

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

### **Message from Rev Eric Lomax**

Ten years ago, I travelled to New York. I had just been doing some work in South India, and I literally got off the plane at Heathrow and climbed on another one to JFK airport. One of the places I wanted to go and see while I was there was the Imagine Memorial in Central Park which is a flat, circular, memorial dedicated to John Lennon, the singer/songwriter from the Beatles who was assassinated just a few hundred yards away, outside his 'Dakota' apartment block on 8th December 1980. The memorial was surrounded by people who still, 32 years after his death, were laying flowers as a tribute to the performer's advocacy of peace and social justice. It was easy to forget the contradiction between Lennon's message and the lavish lifestyle he lived in his very expensive residence on Manhattan Island. His city of origin was Liverpool, a less than lavish city not far from where I spent my childhood and it has always been a standing joke that the reason Liverpool Airport was renamed John Lennon Airport was because that was the first place he travelled to when he gained some money.

John Lennon escaped from his roots, but he never truly escaped from himself. Most communities have a similar phrase that relates to personal identity; 'You can take the person out of Liverpool, but you cannot take Liverpool out of the person.'

Our identity is formed from nature and the environmental variables that formed and shaped our personality, our anxieties and our neurosis. I guess these are fundamental *continued on next page...*

## Message continued...

... psychologic principles, that John Lennon and the rest of us are never truly freed from ourselves.

The 20th Century existentialist philosopher, Jean-Paul Satre, who died of pulmonary edema less than six months before Lennon was murdered, believed that we are ultimately free people. I believe that he said that as human beings we are 'condemned to be free,' that is we have the ultimate freedom to direct our own lives, to fail or succeed. In my view Satre was wrong in that we ourselves are never truly free. We are bound inextricably to the environment and the DNA that formed each of us.

Today we remember the Baptism of Jesus, and at the heart of Baptism is the message of Freedom. Baptism was not invented by John the Baptist, but was instead a 1st century purification ritual that allowed gentiles to enter the faith of Israel. In the story of John the Baptist, the fact that this took place in the river Jordan was highly significant. In the Old Testament, the ancient Israelites crossed the River Jordan in order to move from the Wilderness into the promised land (the final part of the journey from slavery to freedom in the story of the Exodus.).

In the ancient faith of Israel, however, it did not truly matter if an individual had been through this ritual of Baptism. A gentile could never truly become an Israelite. You could take a person out of the wilderness, but you could never take the wilderness out of a person. In a word, we could never truly be liberated from ourselves. That would require a special kind of miracle and a special kind of power.

The revelation comes with Jesus, who as John the Baptist puts it, has a much better kind of power. John will Baptise only with water, while the one who comes after him will baptise with the Spirit and with fire.

### Let us pray...

Heavenly Father,  
at the Jordan you revealed  
Jesus as your Son:  
may we recognise him as our  
Lord

and so be changed into your beloved children;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.



### All Saints' Table Top Sale

The next All Saints' Missions Table Top Sale will be held on Sunday 9th January. All donations of home grown and home made produce would be very welcome. The cash proceeds from the sale of the produce will go to the PCC's chosen charities.

### Bedford Foodbank

Please continue to support this valuable charity and help them prevent hunger in our community.  
[www.bedford.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.bedford.foodbank.org.uk)

This is a new kind of transformation that Jesus gives. He does not just take us from the wilderness into Jerusalem, rather he takes the God of Jerusalem and places the Spirit of God in the wilderness of our hearts. We are not simply moving our bodies from Liverpool to New York, or from the wilderness into Jerusalem, because that way we are simply relocating ourselves from one location or state to another. What Jesus does requires much more power than that. Jesus is transforming our very selves, and liberating us, by the power of God, from the limits of what we are. With him we are changed into what he wants us to be. We are no longer children of Liverpool, or Biddenham or Kempston, but rather sons and daughters of the Living God.

God bless, Eric

### The All Age Bit

This week we are looking at the same reading as the adults (on page 1). This tells us about the baptism of Jesus. In the story, Jesus was baptised by the Holy Spirit coming down like a dove. The Bible also tells us that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are three in one (known as the Trinity). A good way of thinking of this is with ice, water and steam. All three are basically water but they have different looks, feels and properties.

Activities: With adult help, why not examine some ice, water and steam and think about what they are like. Which one would you match with each person of the Trinity? Perhaps Father God would be life-giving like liquid water, Jesus could be solid like ice and the Holy Spirit like the steam? Can you think of anything else in your house/garden/at school that comes in threes, or has three sides? Why not watch the following youtube clip which explains the Trinity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-1AdUwbWLw>

Song: Trinity Song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnUVjLJ6Kas>

Prayer: Wonderful God, you have helped us to see that Jesus is very special. Help us to help others see that too. Amen.

*Resources from Roots and Journey Together (www.tath.co.uk)*

### Suggested Music

Praise my soul the king of heaven  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-n\\_BPn5BxH4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-n_BPn5BxH4)

Hail to the Lord's anointed  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkrepBvrLI4>

If ye love me  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqt005j1dB0>

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