

## GRAPEVINE JANUARY 2020

### Quarterly News from St James' and St Anne's Churches

#### REFLECTION

Julia writes:-

In church on January the 5<sup>th</sup> we celebrated Twelfth Night, no, not the play, nor indeed "Twelve lords a leaping" but the twelfth day of Christmas and the beginning of Epiphany. Epiphany literally means to make known, to reveal, to manifest and it is on this feast that we remember the wise men who, following a star, finally reach the stable and see for themselves the new-born king.

Epiphany has really caught the imagination of many throughout the centuries and it is celebrated in different ways across the globe with everything from King cake to carnivals, to taking down the decorations! But it has also caught the imagination of poets, musicians and artists and in particular one piece of art has really got me thinking this year. It is an image from the cathedral at Autun in France and was created by one of the greatest sculptors of the Middle ages, an artist by the name of Giselbertus.



Here we have the three wise men (or kings, or astrologers...take your pick!) tucked up in bed together with their crowns acting as nightcaps. An angel is waking them with one hand and with the other is pointing to the star that has guided them. This is the moment that the kings are warned in a dream not to return to Herod but to make their way home by another way.

As we enter this New Year, we will all be facing new challenges, circumstances, possibilities and opportunities. Some may be welcome and some many not. In St James and St Anne's we face the challenge to think about where God is leading with us with regard to our witness, worship and particularly with relation to our buildings and finance. As I pondered on this image it struck me that there is much that we can learn from them as we step out into the new year.

Firstly, that these men followed a star that would lead them to worship the baby Jesus. I believe that God calls each one of us to draw closer to him and that as we do so in worship, in prayer and in witness God will lead and direct us. The Bible is full of promises that God will guide and direct our steps if we but stop to ask and listen.

Secondly, these wise men set out not knowing where or when their journey would end. That took quite some leap of faith, but they made it and so must we. It can be very easy to use human wisdom to think that we know what God will say or what we should do but we must cast aside all our preconceived ideas and follow, as the magi did, one step at a time. It would seem however that they did fall into the trap of allowing human wisdom to take over when they stopped following the star and decided on their own to go and visit Herod. That moment of taking their eyes off God led to tragic repercussions for all the baby boys that were murdered as Herod took his anger out on them. As we journey as a church and as individuals let us keep in mind that, as Isaiah reminds us, God's ways are not our ways nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Let us keep faith and trust and not turn aside from God to human plans and ideas.

I very much like the fact that in this image only one of the wise men is awake...I wonder if he woke the others or if the angel finally got them to shake off their sleepiness long enough to hear what was being said! We need to stay alert and stay close to God as we journey with him and keep our eyes fixed firmly on Jesus.

These wise men would have been esteemed in their own lands and probably lived in privilege and security. But their journey would have been an uncomfortable one, long, difficult and dangerous. They would, I suspect, have been well outside their comfort zone as they travelled but with perseverance and determination they went on. I think God may well call each of us to put aside our own preconceived ideas about what church means, about what we feel comfortable with and ask us to step outside our own familiar surroundings as we look to the future.

Finally, these men brought gifts. They laid down in that manger their gold, their frankincense and their myrrh. Those gifts represent perhaps for us our earthly security in money, (the gold) in religious apparatus (the frankincense), and the ever-present danger of allowing ourselves to be dead to God's ways and simply maintain the status quo (the myrrh, preservative of dead things).

Let us like those magi lay down all that we have and open ourselves up to where God is leading us, individually as pilgrims on a journey, and as his body in the places where we live, worship and meet. May we together journey on in faith, hope and with trust in a God who can and does work miracles; and who will lead us to the greatest miracle of all, his love, made manifest in a baby in a manger.

## PRAYER FOR THE CHURCHES

As we have said, prayer is of the first importance as we seek God's guidance for our future. There will be prayer cards available in church for those who would like them.

Here also is a prayer that we can use individually as we ask for God's help.

Dear God, we thank you for all your blessings on us and for the love and fellowship that we share through the gift of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. As we look to the future, we pray for the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Inspire and lead us that we may take your love, blessing and hope into the communities where we live and worship. We pray especially for your guidance with regard to our buildings and for ourselves as we face changes in our church life. Open our eyes to your vision for your church and our lives and grant us faith to follow you every step of the way.

Amen

## VESTRY NEWS

The last Vestry meeting of 2019 took place on 27th November. The main formal purpose of the meeting was to approve the annual accounts for 2018/19 and to review a draft budget for 2019/20. Both were subsequently presented to the congregation at the AGM (see later item). In an important development also intimated at the AGM, Julia announced to the Vestry Bishop Mark's decision that she should give up her responsibility for the charge of St Ninian's, Invergordon, as from the end of 2019. For two members (Tracey Bruce and Steuart Williams) this meeting marked the end of their four-year term on the Vestry and they were thanked for their service, as was Jean Davis for covering many of the People's Warden duties at St James' during 2019.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2019 Church AGM took place on the morning of Saturday 7th December, with 22 members of the congregation present. Copies of the draft minutes have been given a wide circulation, but for those who were not there or have not received the minutes it may be helpful to record that, in addition to the formal business of receiving the annual accounts, the major topic in a discussion led by Julia was the challenge we face in seeking to maintain two ageing and expensive church buildings at a time when our regular income continues to lag below what is needed even to cover the costs of a full time incumbent. Julia summarised the task ahead as follows -

“How do we move forward? First and foremost, we should see this as an opportunity. It is not about closing a church or even churches... it is about where God is leading us on to. It should be about how best we can live as kingdom people and show God's love to the communities where we are called. We need to remember that we are the church, we are the living stones and we are called to be a pilgrim people.

We have to be wise stewards of all that God has given us and to go on spending vast sums of money on two buildings seems to be

dangerously close to building our own house rather than God's house. Our focus needs to be on what God is leading us and not on bricks and mortar. Having said that we do have a heritage that we should honour and be wise stewards of all that we have been given. So our most important task is to pray, individually and corporately, and to seek God's guidance. All this is going to take time, patience and a lot of hard work...but with God's help we can, and nothing is impossible for him."

## CHURCH HALL

Given the continuing upward trend of costs and the growing popularity of the Church Hall as a venue for local organisations and activities, the Vestry has decided that the hourly rate of £8.50 should be raised as from January 2020. The new standard rate will be £10/hour, but a discount will be available for regular use and bulk bookings.

## RECENT EVENTS

### Licensing of Healing Team

On Advent Sunday (1st December) Bishop Mark came to St Anne's to lead the Eucharist and to formally license the Healing Team, who offered their prayerful service to members of the congregation for the first time following the communion that day. It is planned to have the Healing Team available at our Eucharists once a month.



We also took the opportunity to recognise the work of Janet Bowen who recently retired as Lord-lieutenant of Ross & Cromarty. Janet is an active member of our congregation and was presented with an engraved jug and flowers.



## **Alex's Baptism**



We were pleased to welcome Alex to our church community when she was baptised recently. It was a pleasure to share this important day with Alex and her supporting family & friends.

## OTHER NEWS

### Ross-shire Women's Aid



Jean represented the churches at a meeting at Dingwall & Strathpeffer Free Church of Scotland on 4 November to gauge interest for the development of a Starter Pack project in collaboration with Women's Aid. Heather Jazac of Scottish Churches Housing Action and Adele Newlands of Women's Aid gave presentations to local church members, and were delighted with the warm welcome and definite interest in taking this forward. Ross-shire Women's Aid was our chosen charity for support during 2019.

## FROM THE DIOCESE

### Inverness Cathedral

On the 26th January Bishop Mark will install the new diocesan registrar during Choral Evensong at the Inverness Cathedral at 5.30pm. We hope that as many people from throughout the Diocese will be able to attend this service as we welcome Mr Smart to the diocese and his new role. Please RSVP if attending for catering purposes. Phone 01463 237503 or email [office@moray.anglican.org](mailto:office@moray.anglican.org)

W/C 13th January +Mark visited Jordan in his role as Primate for a meeting of Anglican Primates in advance of the Lambeth Conference planned for the summer.

## THIS YEAR'S CHARITY

Last year our chosen charity for donation was Ross-shire Women's Aid. At Vestry in January we decided that this year we would support Toilet Twinning (<https://www.toilettwinning.org>)

By donating £60 to twin a toilet, we help fund a project in a poor community that will enable families to build a basic toilet, have access to clean water and learn about hygiene – a vital combination that saves lives. If we raise £240 we can twin with a toilet block in a refugee camp or a school block.

We will receive a certificate to hang in our loo – showing a photograph of the overseas toilet twin and GPS coordinates making it possible to look up our twin's location on Google Maps.

## LENT

There will be a Eucharist at 7pm on Ash Wednesday (26th February) at St James.

Further details of Lent services and Lent study will be published in February so keep a look out for the information on the website, FB page or Sunday notices.

## EVENTS

### **Soup Lunches**

The dates of Soup Lunches over the coming months will be :-

**Saturday 25th January**

**Saturday 22nd February**

**Saturday 28th March**

As usual, all will be held in the Church Hall, starting from 12 noon, with donations going to church funds. Please come along - and bring your friends.

### **House Group**

House Group meetings have continued. The aim is to meet monthly over a simple meal (and a glass of wine!) and offer an opportunity to study the Bible, pray and grow in fellowship and faith together.

Our next meeting will be on 25th February at 7pm in the Parsonage. The subject for discussion will be 'grace'.

If you wish to attend please let Julia know.

### **Pancake Party**



Our annual Pancake Party will take place on Shrove Tuesday 25th February in St James Church Hall from 11am.

**All welcome**

## CONCERTS & TALKS

### Concerts at St James'

The dates of our next season of chamber concerts at St James' have now been confirmed as follows -

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February** – The Pentland Trio (Emma Donald, Tim Cais, and Ailsa Aitkenhead) with a programme of works for piano trio.

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March** - Michael Ready and Ailsa Aitkenhead, with a programme of music for flute and piano.

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April** - Tim Cais and Ailsa Aitkenhead, with a programme of music for solo cello and cello and piano

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May** – Concert by the Fyrish String Quartet

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June** – A song recital by Celtic Pacifica - Rebecca Murphy (soprano) and Jia Ning Ng (piano)

All concerts will begin at 7.30pm. As usual, refreshments will also be provided. Entry is free but donations to church funds will be very welcome.

## SUNDAY EUCHARIST SERVICES - JANUARY TO MARCH 2020

All are services of Eucharist, starting at 10.30 am, at St James' Church, Dingwall or St Anne's Church, Strathpeffer.

### JANUARY

- 5th - Epiphany (at St James', with healing team)
- 12th - Baptism of the Lord (at St Anne's)
- 19th - Epiphany 2 (at St James')
- 26th - Epiphany 3 (at St Anne's)

### FEBRUARY

- 2nd - Candlemas (at St James', with healing team)
- 9th - Epiphany 5 (at St Anne's)
- 16th - Epiphany 6 (at St James')
- 23rd - Sunday before Lent (at St Anne's)

### MARCH

- 1st - Lent 1 (at St James', with healing team)
- 8th - Lent 2 (at St Anne's)
- 15th - Lent 3 (at St James')
- 22nd - Mothering Sunday (at St Anne's)
- 29th - Lent 5 (at St James')

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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