News and Views from St Peter's Church and

The Parish of Redcar



January 2024

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OFFICE HOUR—the church is open between 6.00pm and 7.00pm on Thursday evenings to discuss baptisms or weddings. For funerals, please contact your funeral director.

Church email address hello@stpeterschurchredcar.co.uk

WORSHIP AT ST. PETER'S

- Sundays 10.00am HOLY COMMUNION
- 2nd Sunday of month
- 10.00am ALL AGE WORSHIP—a family friendly Service with Holy Communion
- 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays of month



ST PETER'S ARK—a service for children 10.00am Come and learn about Jesus with us Sunday 7.00pm NIGHT PRAYER (Compline) on Zoom (fortnightly) Meeting ID: 930 2516 0828, Password: 1234 Wednesday 9.30am HOLY COMMUNION The last Wednesday of the month is also Mothers' Union Corporate Communion Wednesday 6.30pm REFLECTIONS—an opportunity to reflect on the big questions of modern life in a safe, comfortable and friendly space Thursday 9.00am **MORNING PRAYER in the Lady Chapel** 10.00am PRAM SERVICE—a time of worship and play for babies, toddlers and their parents, grandparents, and carers

Sunday services are live streamed and can be viewed on our YouTube channel. Prayers, reflections and notices are posted on St Peter's Facebook page.



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Wise Men, Gifts, and That Star.

A grandma who had come to see her grandchild perform in a Nativity once stopped me . "Can I have a quick word Vicar?" Always a daunting opener. What could it be? A baptism request? a complaint? a pastoral problem? A deep theological conundrum? With a bit of trepidation I sat down next to her wearing my concerned, listening face.

"The wise men brought gold, frankincense, you know the stuff Catholics set fire to and wave about in church, but what on earth is myrrh?" she asked. Come on vicar, I thought to myself, think on your feet.

Well, do you know what it is?

The whole thing about the wise men is that they always get shown in the stable along with the shepherds (who are busy worshipping and dropping off a lamb as a pressie to Mary and Joseph, presumably so they can have a good Christmas dinner) and the lowing cattle, straw, manger, Mary, Joseph and Jesus of course and the star, twinkling through a conveniently placed open window. But I'm not really sure whether this picture is all that close to the real thing. The story of the wise men is found in just one gospel, Matthew chapter 2, which states the 'Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, "where is the one who has been born King of the Jews". We don't know how many there were, early eastern traditions suggest that there were twelve of them, but most traditions have plumped for there being three, one for each gift presented. Legend has even named and described them, Caspar (young, beardless and of a ruddy complexion), Melchior (old, grey with a long beard) and Balthasar (a black wise man with a new beard), but there is no mention of their names or what they looked like in Matthew and neither is there mentioned that they were kings (they probably weren't).

It is also difficult to pin down the timing of the visit. There is a strong likelihood that it wasn't on that first Christmas night along with the shepherds. By the time they did visit, it seems that Mary, Joseph and Jesus were in a house. It actually could have been any time up to two years after Jesus' birth as Herod's awful edict to slay the local children in the hope of getting rid of this new king, included children aged two years and under. Joseph and Mary were still resident in Bethlehem however, so I would imagine that the visit of the Magi did take place when Jesus was still a small baby. Jesus, of course escaped the killings, heeding a message from an angel, they became asylum seekers in Egypt.

Just how the Magi found where Jesus was has also been a bit of a puzzle for me. They were likely to have been astrologer/astronomers (the difference probably being a tad more subtle that it is now) and the star they observed could have been a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter which happened three times in 7 BC. Jupiter was seen as the 'royal' planet and Saturn was sometimes associated with the Jews so it is not hard to see why the magi would have set off for Jerusalem. It does seem a bit early though.

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Others have suggested it may have been a comet. But Matthew says that the star went ahead of them (so they could follow it) stopping over where Jesus was resident in Bethlehem. This made them very happy as we read in verse 10. How could a celestial body lead them to somewhere so precisely. These were not sailors looking for a land mass. Some suggest that the language is poetic and actually they had been sent to Bethlehem by Herod (true) but that they found where Jesus was by other unknown means. But maybe Star of Bethlehem cannot be naturally explained by science! Perhaps it was a temporary and supernatural light. After all, the first Christmas was a time of miracles.

God has often used special, heavenly lights to guide his people, such as the glory that filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38) and the temple (1 Kings 8:10) and that shone upon the apostle Paul (Acts 9:3). Such visible signs of God's presence are known as the Shekinah Glory, or dwelling place of God. This special light is a visible manifestation of divine majesty.

The great mystery of the visit of the magi is not the star however, but just why these Gentile travellers from a far country were chosen to follow this path in order to worship the Messiah. The gifts they brought as well as being appropriate gifts to bring a to a king spoke of Jesus' person; gold for a king, frankincense for a priest and the embalming spice myrrh (to answer the question posed to me by that grandma) for someone who is to die. Myrrh speaks clearly of Jesus' reason for being here among us, ultimately to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Without Easter there's no point to Christmas.

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That same invitation to come and worship is given to us, to bring our gifts and to live lives that give honour and praise to the King. I pray that we can all do this in whatever 2024 has in store for us.

Every Blessing, Rev'd Andy



Andrea Mantegna (Isola di Carturo, circa 1431 - Mantua, 1506) The Adoration of the Magi

LECTIONARY JANUARY 2024

Sunday 7th January

Epiphany

Isaiah 60.1-6 Psalm 72.[1-9]10-15 Ephesians 3.1-12 Matthew 2.1-12

Sunday 14th January

Second Sunday of Epiphany

1 Samuel 3.1-10[11-20] Psalm 139.1-5,12-18* Revelation 5.1-10 John 1.43-51

20] ;*

Sunday 21st January

Third Sunday of Epiphany

Genesis 14.17-20 Psalm 128 Revelation 19.6-10 John 2.1-11

Sunday 28th January

Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

Deuteronomy 18.15-20 Psalm 111 Revelation 12.1-5a Mark 1.21-28



FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

In Loving Memory Funerals held in December 2023				
6th December	Arnie Brown			
14th December	Monica Smith			
18th December	Charles Parvin			
28th December	Maureen Lax			
We pray for their family and friends				

New Year Prayer 2024

Lord, We stand on the threshold of a new year. Some of us are excited, some of us are fearful. We don't know what 2024 will bring, but we know that there will be ups and downs, joy and sadness mixed in with the months. As we step into this new year, help us to keep our eyes fixed on you; to know for certain that, whatever happens, you will be in it with us, not watching from the sidelines, but right in the middle of it with us. Help us to put our trust in what Jesus did on the cross, maybe for the first time, maybe as a New Year re-commitment, so that we will know that nothing can separate us from you. Let the storm rage, let the sun shine – we are safe! In the name of the risen, living Lord Jesus. Amen By Daphne Kitching, taken from The Parish Pump



Every once in a while, a ewe will give birth to a lamb and reject it. There are lots of reasons she might do this. If the shepherd tries to return the lamb, the mother might even kick the baby away. Once a ewe rejects one of her lambs she will never change her mind.

These lambs will hang their heads so low it looks like something is wrong with their little necks, but it is because their spirits are broken. These lambs are called "bummer lambs." Unless the shepherd intervenes, the little lamb will die, rejected and alone.

Do you know what the shepherd usually does? The shepherd will take that rejected little lamb into his home, hand feed it and keep it warm. They will wrap the lamb in a blankets and hold it to their chest so the lamb can hear his heart beat. Once the lamb is strong enough the shepherd will place the lamb back in the field with the rest of the flock.

That sheep never forgets the shepherd's love and care, when their mother rejected them. When the shepherd call for the flock, guess which sheep runs first? That sheep knows the shepherd's voice.

The bummer lamb isn't love more, but the lamb knows intimately the love of the shepherd, experiencing his deep love in his time of need. The lamb trusts the shepherd because of his experience of love and care.

Many of us can identify with a bummer lamb, feeling rejected and broken, but Jesus is the good shepherd and will never leave us and offers us an intimate relationship so we can experience his love and care first hand. Do you know the shepherd's voice?

Blessings, Claire



COFFEE MORNING SATURDAY, 27th JANUARY 10.00am to 121001

In aid of Church Funds



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Happy Christmas EVERYONE and a HAPPY NEW YEAR

I do hope you are still in a festive mood and are looking forward to gathering on

#### Tuesday, 2nd January at 2.00pm

If you are able, please bring a small plate of food to share and we will once more start the year with some fun and frivolity! January is a very popular month for birthdays among our members and it is lovely to celebrate together.

Well done and a big thank you to everyone who contributed towards the church Christmas Fair (our members were involved everywhere!), our toiletries stall looked great and raised £125; and thanks go to Diana and to EMUs Julie, Tracey and Caroline. Whilst the fair was in full swing, Denise, Elaine and I were in the Lady Chapel getting the oranges ready for the Christingle service the next day. That lovely service raised over £300 for the Children's Society.

Thank you to Rev Elaine for leading our Reflection for Advent and to Joyce for the craft activity at our December meeting. It was a lovely afternoon enjoyed by everyone who attended. We had a few apologies (it was that time of the year after all!) but it was great that twenty members made it.

Hopefully, we will be able to sustain our membership through 2024 and even encourage others to join us. Our review of 2023 will take place at our meeting in February, as will the selection of our branch committee and 'office holders' To support the Mothers Union the membership is being asked to give £35 each which does include £5 each towards the upkeep of our diocesan Away From It All (AFIA) caravan holiday project offering supported holiday breaks to less fortunate families in need! (details of how to pay are at the bottom of the article)

God Bless, Anne x





Mothers' Union is a global Christian movement, working with people of all faiths and none to develop communities, strengthen families and advocate for change.

Our members are active in 83 countries and work tirelessly to serve their

communities to build a future where everyone thrives.

If you would like to find out more or feel you would like to be a part of this group,

do continue to read these pages in your Church magazine; visit the church website

to look at back copies of the magazine or go online to

https://www.mothersunion.co.uk to find out more about the national and international aspect of our organisation.

In York Diocese, MOTHERS' UNION MEMBERSHIP for 2024 is £35.00, due by the end of January. Please pay by cheque to Redcar Parish Mothers' Union.

If paying by direct bank transfer (BACS), the Account name is as above,

the Account No. is 14233439 and the Sort Code is 05-07-02.

Please put 'MU SUBs' and your name.

Thank you to everyone who has paid already.

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#### **MEMORIES OF OUR CHRISTMAS FAIR 2023**

Tracey Allen, one of our Evening MU members, writes...

What a gorgeous atmosphere this morning at our annual Christmas Fair. Lots of friendly faces, many new faces that were made welcome, lots of friends that I've not seen for a few years who I've now arranged to meet up with, and lots of amazing festive clothes worn! St Peter's Church has such a warm and welcoming atmosphere which I love being part of and which has made me and my family so welcome for such a long time. It makes me feel very honoured being part of such a special place and having such amazing friends there makes me feel so blessed! Well done everyone! I loved working on our MU stall. Here are the photos I was snapping for our lovely Daphne! They are fabulous. Sorry if I've missed anyone off but it was difficult to get everyone on their stalls so apologies if I didn't take one of you (some prople didn't want their photos taken, either!) Tracey xXx



















## Reader's Rambling

#### Confused? You Could Be!

We have had Advent, the Christmas story and the birth of Jesus, and we are approaching Epiphany or depending on when you read this, it's already passed by. Epiphany marks the

homage of the wise men from the East to the baby Jesus, the Messiah, it is celebrated on January 6th every year. The popular rendition of the Christmas story, however, has some wise men or kings going to see the baby in the stable on His birthday, so, to use a Gavin and Stacey comment, "What's occurring?"

The issue is that the New Testament does not provide any definite clues as to the actual time Jesus was born. Historians note that in Palestine, at night time, shepherds would only have been in the fields watching their flocks in the summer not the winter. Curious. During the reign of the Roman empire, the winter solstice was celebrated on December 25th, a celebration of "Sol Invictus", the invincible sun, and when, in the fourth century, the Romans abolished all pagan festivals, Sol Invictus was implemented as the birth date of Jesus.

Using this date as a start point, church authorities calculated many other special Christian festivals and important dates. The annunciation of Jesus birth, which was judged to have taken place nine months before on March 25th, His circumcision, which took place eight days after His birth on 1st January in accordance with Jewish Law, and the Epiphany on January 6th. All these events are captured in Luke's Gospel for all to read. The two main festivals in the Anglican church as we know are Christmas and Easter and, although Christmas day always falls on 25th December, Easter Sunday appears to be a flexible date. The reason for this is that in the early days many Christians would have celebrated the day on the same day as the Jews celebration of Passover (which actually takes place on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Nisan, the time of the spring equinox). Later, supposedly to avoid confusion, the church fixed the event as the Sunday following the first full moon after the equinox.

There are other special days and festivals that swap about or indeed are no longer celebrated in our church calendar, but they are for another time.

Confused? You could be, I still am! But let's just take a leap of faith in this new year and bask in the glory of our Saviour's birth and the joy that being a Christian brings.

God bless, Steve



#### Rev'd Elaine writes...

One of my favourite games that we always played at parties when I was a child was one where there was a massive bar of chocolate, lots of dressing up clothes and a dice. If you rolled a 6 on the dice you had to put on a random collection of clothes, and attempt to cut a piece of chocolate with a knife and fork but you had to do all this before any of the other players rolled a 6?

Now obviously, the prize in the game is the chocolate! That's what you're looking forward to getting hold of when you play this game. But, depending on how quickly the sixes are rolled, you could end up playing the whole game and getting no chocolate at all! So what tactics could be employed to try to get at that rich chocolatey goal? I can think of 3.

#### Firstly: Don't put on the clothes. Head straight for the chocolate.

But of course that's cheating! I don't think the other players would like you very much and it means you're not playing the game properly. Clothes are pretty much compulsory in our society but of course you all know that.

There is a passage from St Paul's letter to the Colossians that says we are to *clothe ourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.* And above all, we are to clothe ourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Personally, for me, for society to function these are not optional and as we come to the end of 2023 and head into the unknown we need to make sure They are put on day by day along with our underpants and wellies.

But sometimes it's hard to put them on. There are times when it's hard to show kindness when someone has hurt you or humility when you just know you are in the right.

But compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. are not optional, and if we put them on, we will get chocolate. Well, perhaps not always chocolate but people around you will appreciate you be blessed by you.

So that's the first tactic in this game, which is not allowed – you've got to put the clothes on.

A second tactic would be to: **Stretch the clothes so they are easier to put on.** And this is allowed. Clothes need to fit you, and as each of us moves into the future we have to grow! We are all different people to the ones who entered 2023. We have all grown in some way, hopefully not just around the waist! We need to stretch a little for the sake of the other. Our society continually grows and changes, we all need to adapt, to listen to each other as new ideas come along.

#### Finally, a third tactic in the game is to: Get help!

Now in the game it might be frowned on if you got the person next to you to help you cut up the chocolate, but in our society and in our communities, it is certainly allowed! As a church, as Christians it is our duty to reach out and help others. Of course there is someone else to help to and that is worth remembering as we leave 2023 behind and step into 2024 Our God who became incarnate, stepped into our world, and dwelt among us. Our God walks alongside us throughout all the good times and those not so good times. God was with us in 2023 and will be with us throughout 2024. Each day, God's love surrounds and upholds each one of us.

So, as we enter 2024, every day, try to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, and tie them together with love. Remember, clothes are not optional in our everyday working lives, and these spiritual clothes are not optional either.

Bear with one another as we each change and grow. Stretch and try to fit one another.

And don't forget to ask for help! With the help of our friends and family, AND God, we are sure to reach a prize in our everyday lives which is way better than chocolate!

A very Happy, healthy and peaceful New Year to each one of you.

## Blessings, Rev'd Elaine



#### **NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS OF REDCAR CEMETERY**



FRIENDS OF REDCAR CEMETERY

The Friends would like to thank Rev. Andy and members of St Peter's Church who attended the Carol Service. More than 100 people met around the Christmas tree to sing traditional carols. Message tags were available to write a message to a loved one and these were blessed



in the service by Father Paul from Sacred Heart Church. Thanks to Michelle from Roseberry Funerals for the bauble donations which were given to the Friends. Thanks to the Bowling Club for the venue for the Christmas tea and the Community Champions from Tesco and Morrison's for the donation of the mince pies and the Friends for their home baking. All money raised will be put towards replanting the wildflower area in the old section.

We have been part of a health initiative arranged by Redcar and Cleveland Council's Community Health Department to install QR codes onto benches in the



cemetery; these will directly link to bereavement support. This code will put the person in contact with CRUSE (The National Bereavement Charity) then people can access services on this site when they need it most.

#### Memorial post-box – sending messages to loved ones.

This box is installed in the new section of the cemetery. It allows people, young and old to send letters to a loved one who has now passed. Originally it was the idea of Matilda, a 9-year-old girl from Nottingham who wanted to write to her grandparents after they had died. People dealing with bereavement can sometimes find it easier to write down their feelings. The act of posting a letter, card or picture to a lost loved one in the post box will hopefully provide comfort on anniversaries and special days. Every letter or card put into the memorial post box will be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality. They will not be read by anyone but kept safe for a time and then disposed of as ashes dug into the cemetery cottage garden bed where the box is situated.

"Thank you for taking a moment to stop by this special post box whether you wish to write to your loved one on the day of an important family event or for no specific reason. This is a dedicated place for posting letters. If this isn't for you please respect this place as if it helps just one person on their journey of coping with grief then it will have been worth putting it into our cemetery."



We are working on getting notices in our three notice boards, one in each section of the cemetery. These will give the link information if the person needing the help does not have a smart phone. This will include the message 'There is always hope.' Other cemeteries, churches and memorial gardens have taken up this idea.

We are now finishing the work for 2023. Our AGM is booked for January 29th, 2024, 2-4pm at Laburnum Road Library. There will be the usual reports, refreshments, a story in stone and some singing. All are welcome. Dot Ahmed

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#### NEWS FROM EAST REDCAR RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

#### East Redcar Residents Association

There will be no meeting of ERRA In January we have our winter break. The next

meeting will be Thursday, 1st February 2024 at 7.00pm at St Peter's Church,

Redcar Lane.

#### Friends of Borough Park

The Winter Coffee Morning will be on Wednesday, 17th January 2024 from

10.00am till 12noon at Borough Park Bowls Club.

Mike Carling



| <b>ST PETER'S 100 CLUB</b><br>The result of the December 2023 draw was: |             |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| No. 47                                                                  | H Lancaster | £40 |
| No. 95                                                                  | B Mitchell  | £10 |

#### Miscellaneous observations on daily life...

- If you love someone, let them nap
- Take my advice. I'm not using it
- I'd like to help you out. Which way did you come in?
- Cats know how we feel. They don't care, but they know
- Life is like a box of chocolates. Sometimes it makes you sick
- Some people like living in the past. For one thing, the rent is a lot cheaper

#### Why?

A young couple invited some people to dinner. At the table, the mother turned to their six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like to say the blessing?" "I don't know what to say," the girl replied. "Just say what you hear Mummy say," the father answered.

The daughter bowed her head and said, "O Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"

#### Church-speak

MAGI: The most famous trio to attend a baby shower.

PEW: A medieval torture device still found in some churches.

AMEN: The only part of a prayer that everyone knows.

BULLETIN: Your receipt for attending a church service.

#### Friday

Nothing ruins your Friday like realising it's only Wednesday



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