

Bulletin for Sunday 2 January 2022

Greetings, Friends, and best wishes for every blessing this new year.

We pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Brightest and best of the Sons of the morning (R&S 183)

Prayer: God who created every star in the sky,
 we praise you for their light and their beauty...
 we praise you for their patterns and movements,
 helping people to navigate for thousands of years...
 Thank you for the blessings of the last year
 and for the gift of a new one, full of hope...
 Help us hold onto that hope, and follow your light,
 as we step into the future you offer us.
 We ask your blessing on everything we do,
 or bring to you, or give in your service,
 today and every day. In Jesus 'name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Matthew chapter 2, verses 1 to 12

Reflection: For some reason which I don't entirely understand, the carol, 'We three kings of Orient are,' doesn't appear in many hymn books, but I suspect most of us know it off by heart anyway. I rather like it, with its chorus in praise of the star which first alerted the Magi to Jesus' birth, and then led them (after a short diversion) to where he and his parents were staying. I love that after the Magi had mistakenly visited Herod in Jerusalem, when they set out again (having been explicitly told to go to Bethlehem), they stepped out of the lighted palace into the darkness and 'the star... went ahead of them... When they saw the star, they were overjoyed'. This was their pilot, their compass, their safe guide in the darkness. All the light they needed.

Astronomers have argued about this star - was it a star, a planet, a comet...? But the Magi were not astronomers; they were astrologers, and their concern with the star was not its nature, but its meaning. To them it was a sign, and they trusted and followed that sign across many miles and for many days and nights. As we journey into the unknown territory of a new year may we trust God to lead us safely to our destination. Amen

Hymn: As with gladness men of old (R&S 184)

Prayer: Loving God, at the start of a new year
we bring you our hopes for the world:
we pray for peace where there has been conflict,
holding before you all victims of violence and hate;
We pray for healing and wholeness,
holding before you the sick and those who grieve;
We pray for growing justice and kindness,
holding before you the hungry and the homeless;
And we pray for our neighbours, for those we love,
and for light for ourselves as we step out into 2022...
In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers
including the unspoken prayers of our hearts... Amen

Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness (R&S 96)

Blessing: May we be guided to God's 'perfect light'
as the Magi were....
and may the blessing of God
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love,
this week, and always. Amen

There will be a 'Sunday at Six' Zoom at 6pm this Sunday - all welcome.

We all have a part to play in caring for each other and doing what we can to keep everyone safe from Covid - wearing masks, giving people space and having plenty of ventilation. The URC's advice is at

<https://urc.org.uk/covid-plan-b-synod-moderators-updated-guidance/>

Please also let us know if you have a positive Covid test after recently being in church.

It's obviously impossible to make our churches entirely risk-free.

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