

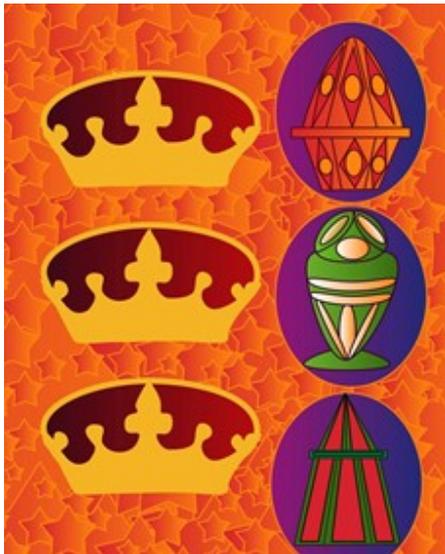
# The Smestow Vale Team Ministry

St Benedict Biscop and the Venerable Bede

Keeping in Touch with our Church Family

Sunday 3rd January

Celebrating the Epiphany



Creator of the heavens  
who led the Wise Men by a star  
to worship the Christ child: guide and sustain us  
that we may find our journey's end  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

*Isaiah 60:1-6*

## Matthew tells of the Visit of the Wise Men.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

*Matthew 2:1-12*

## A Reflection of the journey of the Wise Men by Revd Preb Paul Brown

On the shortest day of the year, December the 21st something really special happened. Saturn and Jupiter orbits came together in what has become known as the great conjunction. Amazingly It has been 400 years since the planets passed this close to each other in the sky, and nearly 800 years since it happened at night. So as night fell, as the darkness gathered I was out there in my back garden stargazing. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity sadly there was too much cloud cover and I saw nothing! Despite my disappointment I was quite

amused to discover that star grazing was number 27 on the National trust's list of 50 things to do before you are 11 and ¾! Their website has lots of tips on how to make sure that you get the best experience of stargazing , number one is it is best done before the moon is full followed by turn off all the lights at home to reduce light pollution. Then there is some other sound advice "the longer you look up, the more you will discover."

The Three Wise Men are probably the most famous stargazers in history. Like many in the ancient world they believed that by watching the stars they would see signs that something great, or something terrible would happen. Stargazing that led them to begin a long and arduous journey. Matthew tells us that as they journeyed they arrived in Jerusalem and on meeting King Herod asked where is the new king of the Jews ? They tell him "we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage." Perhaps they needed advice because cloud cover had obscured their star! Herod, always with an ulterior notice feigns interest and his advisors searched their records and tell the Wise Men that this special birth would take place in Bethlehem. Asking Herod was not the wisest decision, but they journey on until they find the Holy Family where they kneel in homage and offer their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

For most of us the journey through 2020 has been hard, we may even have made some unwise decisions, but like the Wise Men in the Epiphany Gospel We must not give up hope and if we persevere on our journey we will find Jesus and the hope for the world in 2021 that is there in the cradle and the cross.

*Paul*

### **Prayers for the Epiphany**

#### **Sunday**

Pray that we may follow the star of hope and joy in these difficult times. (Matthew 2: 10)

#### **Monday**

Pray that post-Brexit talks will continue until an agreement is reached.

#### **Tuesday**

Pray for all hauliers working through the Channel ports.

#### **Wednesday**

Pray that new strains of Covid will not withstand the vaccines,

#### **Thursday**

Pray for our country under varying degrees of lockdown.

#### **Friday**

Pray for wisdom and strength to continue to follow all precautions.

#### **Saturday**

Pray for all God's blessing on all who were unable to attend worship over Christmas

### **Please remember those who have asked for our prayers**

Lisa, Morgan, Margaret Ward, Joy Waistell, Sarah Aldridge, Jane, Delma Scriven, George Moorhouse, Joan Edwards and Carl Baker.

#### **Those who have died**

Michael Concannon, Patricia Mogford and Keith Wilson.

Please send requests for prayers to the Parish Office.

St Benedict's will be open for private prayer through out the week.

Next Sunday there will be:

8.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Parish Communion.

**Don't forget** that restrictions are still in place so it is **very** important to book with Hilary on 01902 892856 or by email [hilmoore@gmail.com](mailto:hilmoore@gmail.com). Please telephone by 12noon on Saturday. There will be a service led by Paul on Facebook and on You Tube this Sunday.

You can still make donations to our Christmas Charity The Honey Pot Children's Charity.

For young carers.

#### **From the Government Guidelines**

In Church " , you must not mingle with anyone outside of your household or support bubble."

Please observe the 2meter rule in church.

"A household is a person or a group of people who live together in the same accommodation."

"A support bubble is where a single adult living alone, or a single parent with children under 18, can form an exclusive network with one other household where social distancing does not have to be observed."

"The 2 households that form a support bubble count as one household for the purposes of this guidance."

#### **Thank you**

To those who have decorated the Church for our Christmas celebrations and to Simon and Elizabeth Keeling for their help with the online Christmas Services

