



SUNDAY SERVICE SUSPENSION

Following an Ad Clerum from Bishop Martin, the PCC has consulted over the safety of Sunday services at St Thomas' in light of the growing Corona-virus crisis locally.

The members have decided to SUSPEND SUNDAY SERVICES until further notice, but to keep the matter under review.

We look forward to gathering again when Covid numbers have fallen and it is safe so to do.

RECTOR

The Rector vacancy has been re-advertised online and in the Church Press. Interviews are scheduled for the end of February. We pray that we may be sent a faithful pastor.

PRAYERS

We pray for all those in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity at this difficult time for so many.



ALMIGHTY God, the giver of every good gift, look graciously, we beseech thee, on thy Church, and so guide with thy heavenly wisdom the minds of those to whom is committed the choice of a Rector for this benefice, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who shall feed thy flock according to thy will, and make ready a people acceptable unto thee; through Jesus Christ, thine only Son our Lord. Amen.

Electrical safety

A reminder that only electrical appliances carrying a church Portable Appliance Test certificate may be connected to the church's electricity supply.

This is essential to ensure

compliance with our insurance policy. Should there be a fire or other accident, we may find that we are not covered.

Recently, an unauthorised item was connected which resulted in electric shock.

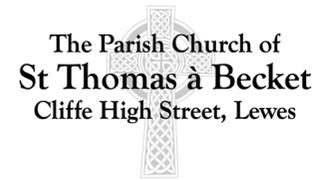
MASKS

A reminder that, apart from those who are exempt, masks must be worn while in church but may be removed to receive Communion.



2021 EVENTS

We had planned a calendar of new year events but the worsening Covid crisis means that everything has been put on hold. It seems most unlikely that we will be able to hold our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Party and Beetle Drive, for instance. We do hope to restore the diary as soon as we can.



10th January 2021
EPIPHANY I



The Collect

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people which call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle – Romans 12.1-5

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

The Gospel – St. Luke 2.41-end

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man.



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Sunday 10th January 2021
EPIPHANY I



As you will see from the news item on the back page, the PCC has decided to suspend Sunday services at St Thomas' temporarily due to the worsening Coronavirus situation locally and the spread of the virus threatening our congregation.

The situation will be kept under review, and we hope to be back again once the Covid infection rate in East Sussex has dropped.



With thanks to Gerald for this image of the Kings in our church crib.

SERMON

FIRSTLY, a very blessed New Year to you. Although the news is very gloomy indeed at present we can take heart that Christmas brought the good news that God is with us in Christ born at Bethlehem and come amongst us, as we journey into this new year together.

In today's gospel reading we hear about the young boy Jesus growing up and accompanying Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. We can imagine what an exciting experience that must have been for Jesus to be part of a large family group going together to Jerusalem, that great and holy city.

At the age of 12 he would be growing up with the experience of education, worship at the synagogue and family life and life in general. He would also be well versed with the Holy Scriptures. Apart from this there is then very little we know of Jesus' growing up until his baptism at the age of 30. However, St Luke, in recording this event reflects an important point.

At the age of 12 a Jewish boy celebrates the Bar Mitzvah and becomes 'a son of the law' and being able to accept the promises made by his parents in his youth and so to celebrate this event Jesus

is taken up to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. However, it transpires that after the festival, on their return journey to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph discover that Jesus is not with them. The travelling family company would have been large, with everyone sharing the care for one another, so it would not be too surprising not to have noticed the absence of Jesus for some while, indeed for a whole day we are told. So his parents return to Jerusalem and find the young Jesus in the Temple, exercising his enquiring mind by listening to and engaging with the doctors of the law. We can understand their concern and so when finding him safe Mary asks 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ?. Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing'.

In reply Jesus says to them 'How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'. We might well ponder what this meant, as no doubt Mary and Joseph must have done. Yet, part of the answer is in the earlier part of St Luke's account where the boy Jesus was presented to God at the Temple and Simeon, upon seeing him, declares 'For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel'. Jesus'

reply to his mother signified his life for he was becoming aware of not only coming to God at the Temple and taking on the Jewish law but also the realisation that he was indeed God's Son – 'wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

We have on Wednesday this last week had the Feast of Epiphany when we remember the visiting wise men from the East, being drawn by the bright star, and coming to see the child Jesus shortly after his birth. As we know they brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. However, they also brought themselves. May we to, as we enter a new year and amid the current gloom and dark times, look up and acknowledge that bright star of hope, that God came into our world to be with us.

In those wise men God draws all nations and peoples to himself and may we in this new year bring ourselves also to God in thanksgiving of His coming to us and in offering ourselves to Him in our worship and gifts of service.

Amen.

Fr Herbert.