West Sussex Area Ministry, United Reformed Church (Billingshurst, Petworth and Pulborough)

Bulletin for Sunday 3rd January 2021

Good Morning - and very best wishes for 2021, which we all hope and pray will be a better year for everybody.

We are now in 'Tier 4', and the Elders Meetings of both Billingshurst and Pulborough have decided that worship in our churches must be suspended for a while. Petworth will be open for a short service this Sunday, but shut from next week. The hope in all cases is to re-open for worship as soon as possible, so the closures for now are until the end of January, when they will be reviewed in the light of the situation at that time.

In the meantime the Bulletin will continue, as will worship and social activities online. We are hoping to add a temporary Sunday morning service on Zoom, as well as the evening one, so that we can worship at our usual time while the church buildings are shut. If anybody (with basic computer skills - not necessarily huge technical wizardry) would like to join a rota of people assisting with our various Zooms, please have a word with me.

Let's pause..... and take time to focus on worship.

<u>Hymn</u>: In the bleak midwinter (R&S 162)

Prayer: God of new beginnings,

as we tiptoe nervously into a new year, we pray that you will walk beside us, helping us to find our way safely, and to find fresh hope, firmer faith, and greater awareness of your infinite love. We ask your blessing on everything we do, and everything we give in your service, today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Matthew chapter 2 verses 1-12

<u>Reflection</u>: They travelled an immensely long way, following a single bright star, with no more information than what their reading of the night skies had told them... They had great courage and great determination; but what was it that drew them so far from home? What did they expect to find? And why was it so important to them, when the promised child was of a different nationality and a different religion? Perhaps they didn't know that when they started out... perhaps they thought they were only going a short way... but then the star kept leading them on -

further from home, across the desert, into foreign lands... on and on... Surely it was God that drew them, whether they understood it or not.

Visiting Herod was a mistake: the advice of his 'experts' set them back on the right road, but stored up tragic consequences for later. Finally a brief - but wonderful - encounter, filled with joy and worship and rich presents, before their long return journey, as further divine intervention sent them home 'by another road'.

Such a long way to visit a baby; but God drew them on - just as we are drawn on. May we have their courage and perseverance; and be led safely through this next year.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning	(R&S 183)
asking that you bless them, and us, with courage	
Great is thy faithfulness (R&S	96)
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	
	Loving God you accompany us as we journey through life We pray for those who travel in fear, trying to escape from the past and we pray for those who travel in hope, looking forward to better things in the future We hold before you our communities and our loved ones asking that you bless them, and us, with courage and with faith, as we step forward into this new year with Hear all the prayers of our hearts Amen Great is thy faithfulness (R&S May we continue our journey with bright hope for tomorro and may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and with all those we love

There will be a chance to chat at 'After Church Coffee' Zooms on Sunday at 11.30am as usual, and 'Sunday at Six' worship (with hymns) on Zoom at 6pm. All very welcome.

Anne Lewitt