

3rd SUNDAY after EPHIPHANY 2023: Sunday 22nd – 28th January 2023

Greetings from Eileen

Dear Friends,

This Sunday churches around the country are in the middle of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme this year challenges us that all lives matter even black lives with remembrance of the life-extinguishing restraint of George Floyd. It challenges us to ask if Christians are truly united in treating all lives justly.

*We give them names: refugees,
asylum seekers, migrants,
economic migrants,
some more welcome than others.*

*But you know their human names
because they are your kin,
stamped with your image,
divinely human.*

On Thursday 26th January, the UK Online Commemoration for Holocaust Memorial Day will be streamed and we are invited to join by registering: <https://www.hmd.org.uk/ukhmd/> Time and time again, some lives have not mattered in the absence of humanity and the abandonment of love. God calls us to turn from the sin of injustice.

This week, the House of Bishops have emerged from lengthy prayerful deliberations in relation to sexuality, same sex relationships, and marriage: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/draft-prayers-thanksgiving-dedication-and-gods-blessing-same-sex> Our Bishops Paul and Sarah have issued a pastoral letter (appended to this newsletter). As one of 3 UKME Participant Observers on the House of Bishops I can testify to all the bishops wrestling prayerfully with their positions, scriptural understanding, and concerns both pastoral and theological. There were significant differences of hopes and perspectives, and disagreements reflecting the breadth of views across the Church of England. I have heard initial reactions: a fudge and muddle, because the Bishops have not announced a change to the Doctrine of Holy Matrimony, which defines marriage as being between one man and one woman. Bishops however have issued prayers of thanksgiving, dedication, and God's blessing on faithful and loving relationships between couples regardless of gender, where they have made public their commitment in covenanted friendships, civil partnerships, and marriage in civil law. The 2 decisions are not necessarily a contradiction and priests may choose or decline to use the prayers. The Archbishop of Canterbury will not use the prayers in acknowledging his role in unity with the large majority in the Anglican Communion, and with the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.

SERVICES this Sunday 22nd January 2023

9.15am	St Mary's, Staindrop – Communion (Rev'd Susanne Jukes)
9.30am	St Andrew's, Winston – Communion (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)
10.45am	St Mary's, Gainford – Communion (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)
11.00am	St John The Evangelist, Ingleton – Communion (Rev'd Susanne Jukes)
4.00pm	St Osmund's, Gainford – Service for Christian Unity (Fr Thomas Mason with Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)

May the light of faith illumine our hearts through him who is Christ the Lord.

Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop

NOTICES:✦ **All 4 of our Parochial Church Councils (PCC) meet in January.**

- **Staindrop** St Mary Monday 9th January 6.30pm at Diane's
- **Gainford** St Mary Wednesday 11th January 7pm at Geoff and Sue's
- **Ingleton** St John Thursday 26th January 3pm at St John's
- **Winston** St Andrew Monday 30th January 7pm at the Village Hall

New members are welcome. If you wish to know more or might be interest to help in any way, I'd welcome a chat especially if you are not sure about being able to commit to being on the PCC. Call or email me: 01325 733154 ekgharrop@gmail.com

✦ **You are invited to our EPIPHANY BIBLE JOURNEY!** There will be 2 sessions on **Wednesdays 8th and 15th February at 7pm in St Mary's Church, Gainford.** To find out and to register your interest contact Cressida Heath c/o stmarys@gainfordwinston.church This is open to anyone from all 4 parishes and anyone interested from further afield.

✦ **Please pray for loved ones of the recently departed:**

- Steve and Alison White and family on the passing of Steve's mother Isobel Appleton (service in Wear Valley Crematorium, Friday 10th February, 11.30am)
- The family of Barbara Jean Hunt (whose service was conducted in Gainford St Mary 16th January 11.30am with burial in Gainford cemetery)
- Gordon Grieve on the passing of his stepfather Norman Brown (service in Gainford St Mary 25th January 2pm followed by Committal in Darlington Crematorium)
- Sylvia Watson on the passing of her beloved husband Patrick from Winston (in Wear Valley Crematorium, 6th February 11.30am)
- The family of Dianne Fletcher of Staindrop (service in Staindrop St Mary 31st January 11am followed by burial in Staindrop Cemetery)

And pray for all for whom this is a difficult time missing loved ones departed.

Today is the start of the Chinese New Year (15 days from 22nd January):
Happy Lunar New Year – the year of the rabbit – to our Chinese family and friends.

Collect for the 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Post Communion Prayer

Almighty Father,
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of
the world:
may your people,
illumined by your word and sacraments,
shine with the radiance of his glory,
that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed
to the ends of the earth;
for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
Amen

First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4 (NRSVA)

¹ But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:12-23 (NRSVA)

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” ¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

A message from Bishop Paul and Bishop Sarah

As you know, since 2017 the Church of England has been exploring issues around identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage through ‘Living in Love and Faith’ and many of you have engaged in this process. One of the issues explored has been whether same sex couples should be allowed to marry in a Church of England church. You will have seen in the media this week the proposals being put forward to General Synod by the College of Bishops. Today, the official communication of the proposals has been made available - [please click here](#). We recognise that some of you will think these proposals have gone too far, while others will think they have not gone far enough. This has been difficult and at times painful for those on all sides of the debate.

We wholeheartedly share in the apology made to those from the LGBTQI+ communities who have often been badly treated by the church over many years. Under the new proposals we sincerely hope that all churches will be places that welcome same-sex couples joyfully. The proposals being presented to General Synod will not permit same sex couples to marry in church, but for the first time they would be able to come to church to have their civil marriage blessed and receive God’s blessing. It is

important to say that the prayers to be made available are voluntary for clergy to use and that the Church's understanding of Holy Matrimony remains as between one man and one woman.

Having been part of this long discussion process, we believe the proposals offer the best compromise we could have hoped for. We have been deeply encouraged by the College of Bishops, in which deep disagreements are held, where everyone has worked hard to reach a position that a majority of the bishops support. We encourage you to look at the actual papers being presented to the Synod, not simply the media summaries that are circulating. We realise some will wish to discuss the proposals with us and we will happily arrange this after General Synod has undertaken all its work.

We must focus now on bringing everyone together, from all sides of the debate, to ensure that all feel valued, loved and welcomed.

Please continue to hold us, General Synod and the whole church in your prayers.

+Paul and +Sarah