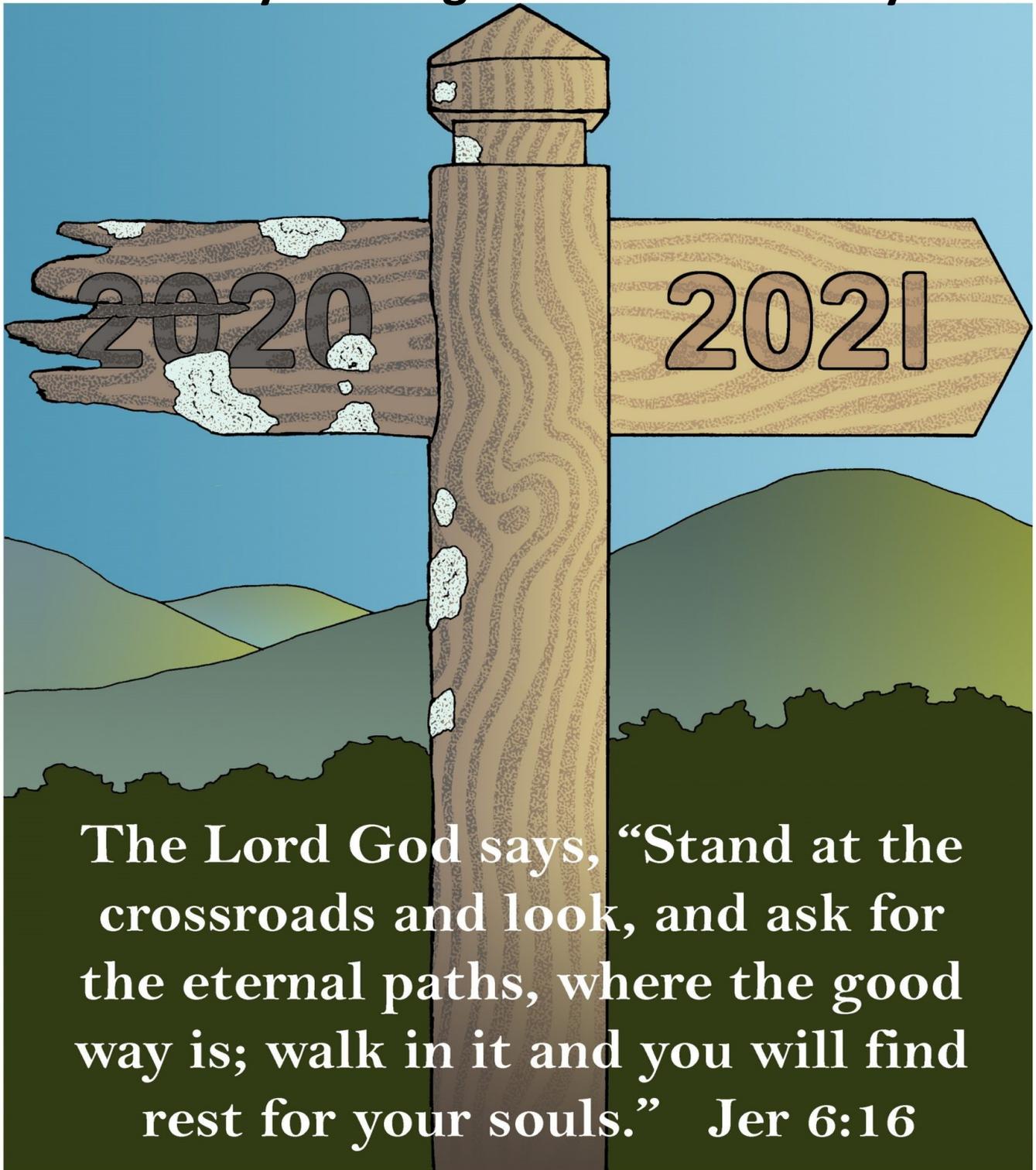


2021

January
2021

St Mary the Virgin— North Shoebury



The Lord God says, "Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the eternal paths, where the good way is; walk in it and you will find rest for your souls." Jer 6:16

FIIDAY 1ST JANUARY—NEW YEAR'S DAY
MONDAY 25TH JANUARY— BURN'S NIGHT



Craig
has sponsored the
publication of this
month's magazine .

Mid-week services

Monday	9:00am	Morning prayer
Thursday	9:00am	Morning prayer
	10:00am	Communion

**ARE CURRENTLY SUSPENDED— REVIEW
AT THE END OF JANUARY**

January

Epiphany 2021

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. (Matthew 2:2b-3)

Happy New Year – again.

We started the church new year at the beginning of Advent, back at the end of November, now of course, we start the New Year again at the beginning of January. The readings come out of order, for the Festival of the Holy Innocents, which marks the moment Herod ordered all the boys under two years old to be sought out and killed was on 28th December. The day I am writing this.

The Bible reading that I have used to start this letter is taken from the reading for Epiphany, 6th January; also known as Twelfth Night. At St. Mary's we will be thinking about the visit of the Wise men, the Magi, on Sunday 3rd January 2021.

As Matthew tells us his account of the nativity, we can see that there is a clear parallel with Moses. Moses was born at a time when all the male children of the Hebrews, then living in Egypt, were to be killed, because Pharaoh considered them a threat, and needed to be “controlled”. Moses, who was saved, became the leader who brought the Hebrews out of slavery.

When Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt with Mary and his child to avoid Jesus being caught up with the massacre, Matthew is recalling the “Moses incident”.

In both accounts, there was much in common, but what stands out for me, is that the ruler of the day was “frightened” by a child. I wonder, what is it about despotic leaders that makes them so afraid?

Just to clarify, Despotism (Greek: Δεσποτισμός, despotismós) is a form of government in which a single entity rules with absolute power. Normally, that entity is an individual, the despot; but (as in an autocracy) societies which limit respect and power to specific groups have also been called despotic.



Sadly, even in the 21st Century, there appear to be more despotic leaders now than at any time in history. Do they not learn the lessons of history? Are they so tied up in their own vanity that they do not care?

Epiphany presents us with three contrasts in what “king” means.

The wise men, are also known as “kings”. We normally sing “We three Kings of Orient are”. The wise kings knew that something special had happened. They travel across the then known world to bring gifts and celebrate this birth. They are not intimidated by the one born to be “King of the Jews”. From what is recorded, they see this as a good event for all humanity.

We are also presented with King Herod. Even though he was local, he did not know of the prophecy. He was a despotic leader, who actually cared only for himself. Any “new” king was a threat to be eradicated. Today, we still see leaders like this.

But all is not lost, there is a third king in Matthew’s nativity, Jesus. Jesus was the focus of attention, and as a consequence of His ministry, became not only “King of the Jews”, but the Messiah; God with us, the word made flesh. He showed a new way of being “king” and so is rightly called our saviour.

During Advent we have been thinking about what “**Living in the Kingdom of God**” might mean for us, both as individuals, and as a church and a community. Do we need to be reminded that we do indeed live in the **Kingdom of God**?

I think we do, and it might be good if we find ways to remind ourselves that we do. To remind ourselves that there is much to celebrate and be thankful for.

As we go boldly into this New Year, I hope we can find ways to share this Good News.

God bless

David

David Pierce is Lead Minister at St Mary



Sponsor the Magazine

As we enter 2021 the situation remains uncertain and unclear. Whether we will be able to continue to gather and meet to worship safely is in doubt.

I hope that our monthly magazine has provided some continuity and we are grateful for the support of our advertisers and to all who sponsored publication throughout last year as we continued with most in colour when we could make a physical print run.

Please consider sponsoring publication again this year! Not only does it relieve pressure on Church funds but gives us all the opportunity to join with you in celebration or remembrance. Here are the dates available in 2021:

Month	Sponsor	Month	Sponsor
Jan 21	Craig	July 21	
Feb 21		Aug 21	
Mar 21		Sept 21	
Apr 21	Alan & Rosemary	Oct 21	
May 21		Nov 21	
June 21		Dec 21	

If you would like to sponsor a magazine, for a birthday, anniversary, in memory or for thanksgiving, please contact Francine.

£25 b&w, £35 colour gift aided or not, would cover the professional printing of a monthly magazine.

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The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

You may have had several years of intensive training on biblical interpretation, preaching and church history, but that doesn't cover the really important matters in parish life: how to evade disgruntled parishioners, run a brisk Summer Fete and, in your case at present, deal with correspondence, either by letter or email.

My regular practice, which I recommend to you as a New Year Resolution, is to read all the letters/emails you receive and then discard them. If the matter is truly important, you will receive a second message, to which you respond; more likely, the sender will either have forgotten all about his first letter/email after the second month or will write to some other cleric instead. In either case, you will be saved a great deal of trouble.

You only need two folders for your filing system, either for post or emails. The first is for complaints; they are to be filed and ignored, no matter how many duplicates you are sent. Should you be confronted personally, you simply say that the matter has been passed on to the bishop. Those truly dogged complainants who pursue the matter will eventually receive an episcopal reply saying he knows nothing of the matter, for which you then blame the postal system/spammed email. After letters and emails have ricocheted round the country for many months, the person complaining will either have lost energy to pursue the matter, or the will to live.

The second file receives all other correspondence/emails chronologically. The earliest letters and emails will be at the bottom of the pile and the most recent on the top. In my experience, the postal file only needs attention when it reaches a height of about two feet and becomes unstable. The practice then is to discard the lower six inches and allow it to continue its steady growth. If the stack is kept in the church vestry, then mice usually attend to the papers on the bottom of the pile.

Sadly, your own church, with its electronic systems for filing, sorting and retrieving correspondence and with your parish secretaries, removes all of these blessings at a stroke. You have therefore no excuses for not dealing instantly with every note that comes your way. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. May I also remind you that not even St Paul, that unflagging letter-writer, ever ended one of his letters with a request for a prompt reply. Need I say more?

Your loving uncle,

25th Jan: Conversion of St Paul

January is a month of the beginning of great things! As well as the naming of the Son of God, we celebrate the conversion of the greatest ever apostle of the Christian faith. Many books have been written on Paul, and here is the briefest of introductions.

He was a Jew, born as 'Saul' at Tarsus, and brought up by the rabbi Gamaliel as a Pharisee. A devout, fanatical Jew, Saul persecuted the Christians, and watched with satisfaction the first Christian martyrdom, the stoning of Stephen. Then, on his way to Damascus, Saul had a vision of Christ that stopped him in his tracks. He realised that this Jesus whom he was persecuting was in fact the Messiah for whom he had longed.

Saul changed overnight. He was given a new name, Paul, and became an evangelist for the cause of Christ. He became a leader in the early Church, and his special calling was as an apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote epistles to the young churches that he founded - and thus, inadvertently, wrote a great part of the New Testament.

Life as the greatest apostle was hardly full of perks: Paul was stoned, beaten, mobbed, homeless, hated, imprisoned, and finally martyred. Tradition has it that he was beheaded in Rome during the persecution of Nero in 64AD, and buried where the basilica of St Paul 'outside the walls' now stands. His mighty faith in Christ has kindled similar belief in many hundreds of millions of people down the centuries.





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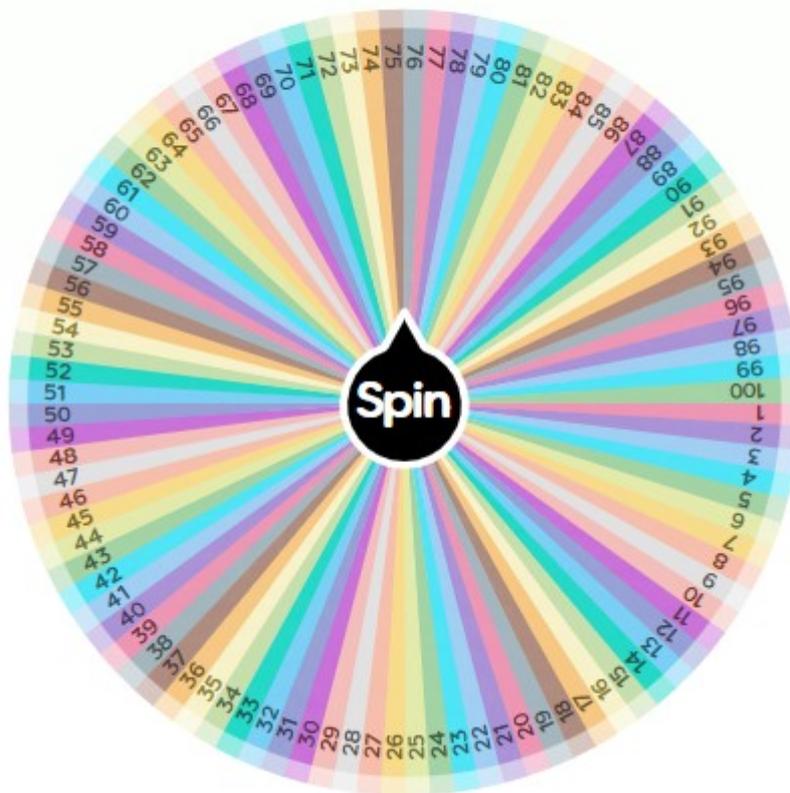
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St Mary's Rational Lottery 100 Club

As we go to print we have sold 64 numbers so there are still 36 places for friends, neighbours, family members, work colleagues and others to join in before the first draw on the **28th January**. It would be so good to start with a “full house”. Please make one last effort to get one more participant each!

Some of you will know former members of the congregation who have moved away—please ask them to join.

numbers 1 - 100



January



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Bishop Peter's New Year Message: The Quality of Life

2020 has been a truly tough year for everyone and as 2021 dawns it seems unrelenting. The brutal coronavirus remains, and even though vaccines are gradually becoming available, many have lost jobs, schools are still disrupted, the economy is uncertain, desperate refugees still arrive and we don't know how our new relationships with Europe and the USA will pan out. Many are anxious and our quality of life is deeply challenged. As the journey of 2021 begins how will we handle it?



All of life is a pilgrimage, a journey through time with God and others. As human beings we are bound by chronological time: past, present, and future. But a Christian is called to view time from the perspective of eternity. Christian eternity is essentially about quality of life rather than quantity. That is what defines our pilgrimage.

In English we have one word for time, but the original Greek of the New Testament uses two very different words. First of all "*chronos*", where we get the word chronological, meaning measured time, a period of time, say for a journey. The other Biblical word is "*kairos*". Here the meaning is about the content and quality of time rather than its length: what's going on within the time, eg a time of harvest, a time of temptation.... Even more importantly it's about opportunity and fulfilment, '*the Kingdom of God is at hand!*'. What we do for God and others in the time he gives us. How do we use it? What do we put into it? This is the idea of time that is crucial in Christian thinking and discipleship.

The longest journey is the journey inward. Have a good journey in 2021.

As we journey into a new year it is this more Christian view of time I would encourage us all to reflect on. What are we going to put into each day in our pilgrimage through 2021? How are we going to use the time for others? God is concerned about the quality of our lives rather than their length. That is hard for us to accept, but I believe this is real time as God created it. From the eternal perspective it is relationships, love, and friendship that last, that count most and can change us for the better. *Kairos* is a life word whereas *chronos*, by definition, is a death word. In Ecclesiastes 3 the Bible tells us “*there is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven*”. There **is** a time for everything God wants us to do in our lives. Some of those things are positive: birth, planting, healing, laughing; while some are negative: uprooting, weeping, death Both can lead us to God if we throw ourselves wholeheartedly into life’s experience. A verse I came across a few years ago seems to sum it up.

*Time is too slow for those who wait,
too swift for those who fear,
too long for those who grieve,
too short for those who rejoice,
but for those who love.... time is eternity.*

(Henry Van Dyke)



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www.stmarynorthshoebury.org.uk

As the days are dark, and winter still stretches ahead, many of us find the prospect of more restrictions for months to come even harder than when we first went into lockdown.

After nine months of coronavirus, we are emotionally drained. We are financially drained. We are lonely, depressed, frightened, and facing deep uncertainty, from job losses to health problems to relationship breakdown. We are running out of steam, and the virus is still going strong.

There is a strong parallel in all this with the ancient book of Job and his experience of loss and pain. Like Job, we are discovering that we are not always entitled to health, wealth, and happiness; and like Job our suffering inexplicably goes on and on. Like the irritating moralising of Job's comforters, the constant critique of the media only seems to make things worse. And, like Job, our minds are incapable of totally grasping the meaning of all this suffering. We need hope.

Job was deprived of everything, yet even in his despair he never lost his belief that God was there. Occasionally an indestructible hope burst forth like a ray of light in the darkness of his pain. "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.' (Job 19:26).

But the truly transformative moment for Job came when, instead of seeing his situation in front of God, he finally *saw God in front of his situation*. Then, even in the intensity of his suffering, the greatness of the Almighty eclipsed the problem. That is the revelation we need.

In this sad and weary time lament is therapeutic, and we can be completely real with our Father in Heaven. Yet in our lament, the path to rekindling true hope lies in the possibility of focusing on the character and immensity of God. Greater is He that is in us than the pandemic that is in the world.

Join in with the ancient words of Psalm 42: 'Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Saviour and my God.'

Psalm 42

1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

3 My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

4 These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.

5 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

6 My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.

8 By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?”

10 My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

11 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.



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6th Jan: Where did the Wise Men come from?

Magi from the East – it isn't a lot to go on. The Magi had originally been a religious caste among the Persians. Their devotion to astrology, divination and the interpretation of dreams led to an extension in the meaning of the word, and by the first century the Magi in Matthew's gospel could have been astrologers from outside of Persia. Some scholars believe they might have come from what was then Arabia Felix, or as we would say today, southern Arabia.

It is true that in the first century astrology was practised there, and it was the region where the Queen of Sheba had lived. She of course had visited Solomon and would have heard the prophecies about how one day a Messiah would be born to the Israelites and become their king.

Matthew's gospel (chapter 2) is clear that the Magi asked Herod: 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' So it is possible that in southern Arabia the Queen of Sheba's story of how a Messiah would one day be sent to the Israelites had survived. Certainly, there are a number of other early legends that connect southern Arabia with Solomon's Israel.

To many people this makes sense: that the ancient stories of a Messiah, linked to later astrological study, prompted these alert and god-fearing men to the realisation that something very stupendous was happening in Israel. They realised that after all these centuries, the King of the Jews, the Messiah, was about to be born.

One more interesting thing that gives weight to the theory that the Magi came from southern Arabia is this: if you study any map of Palestine as it was during biblical times, you will find that the old Arabian caravan routes all entered Palestine 'from the East'



HAPPY NEW YEAR

(An acrostic poem where the first letter of each line spells out the title of the poem)

Heaven's gift of another year
As the old departs and the new is born,
Plans for a future and a hope
Preparing us for each new dawn.
Yesterday has gone forever,

New days and ventures lie ahead,
Even darkness turns to light
When we make the Lord our head.

Yielding to the Holy Spirit
Ever mindful that He's there,
As we live our lives before Him
Rejoicing in His loving care.

By Megan Carter

The word "January" is written in a blue, cursive font. It is decorated with several yellow stars: one at the top left, one at the bottom left, and one at the bottom right. A large, yellow, multi-pointed starburst graphic is positioned behind the end of the word.

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.

Matthew 2, verse 12