

The United Benefice of St Michael
Lichfield and St John, Wall

Epiphany 2 – 17th January

Canticle - The Song of Christ's Glory

**At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow.**

**Christ Jesus was in the form of God,
but he did not cling to equality with God.**

**He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant,
and was born in our human likeness.**

**Being found in human form he humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.**

**Therefore God has highly exalted him,
and bestowed on him the name above every name.**

**That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth;**

**And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

Philippians 2.5-11

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
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.

Old Testament Reading: 1 Samuel 3.1-10

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' ⁵and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. ⁶The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

New Testament Reading: Revelation 5.1 - 10

¹I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; ²and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁴And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.'

⁶Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. ⁸When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹They sing a new song:

'You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God
saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;

¹⁰you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God,
and they will reign on earth.'

Psalms 139.1-9

¹ O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

³ You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Gospel Reading: John 1.43-end

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' ⁵⁰Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' ⁵¹And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Post Communion Prayer

God of glory,
you nourish us with your Word
who is the bread of life:
fill us with your Holy Spirit
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sermon

Beloved children

Epiphany 2, 17th January 2021
1 Samuel 3:1-10

Bishop Sarah's sermon for 17 January 2020

May I speak in the name of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The first time I preached on our Old Testament passage set for today: 1 Samuel, chapter 3, verses 1-10, I was expecting our son. There was something incredibly personal and powerful in the experience of reading again the story of Hannah's trust in the faithfulness of God and of her obedience in fulfilling her promise to God.

Often, we read or hear the Bible in bits and pieces, which doesn't always help us to understand the overall flow and meaning. The books of Samuel tell of the emergence of Samuel as God's leader in Israel, a leader who will prepare the way for David as King. As the books begin, Israel is struggling under pressure from the Philistines, politically weak and economically disadvantaged, but also a community in moral chaos, waiting for a king who will defend them and lead them forward as a united community.

However, the books of Samuel do not immediately rush to tell us of David - first there is the waiting. And at the moment we all know something about waiting don't we?

- Waiting for the day when we can see our loved ones and friends again.
- Waiting for the time when we can get together for major life events without having to restrict numbers.
- Waiting for the day when we can see one another face without a mask, when we can shake hands, hug one another and sit next to someone.
- Waiting for our COVID vaccinations.
- Waiting to see whether our children & grandchildren can safely return to their usual pattern of schooling.

So much waiting.

From my perspective, one of the most interesting things about our particular passage today is what has already happened in the biblical narrative, before it begins.

The first book of Samuel opens with the introduction of a family, the husband, Elkanah and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. It is Hannah who is to become the focus as her waiting and trust in God encourage her to believe that God will answer her prayer for a son. We are invited to listen and to notice that waiting and hoping can result in blessing.

The first chapter begins in waiting, records the answer to Hannah's prayer and ends with the fulfilment of her promise to give her son over to the service of the God she loves and trusts. We see God's transformative power at work in the life of an individual, a family and a community. God bringing life and hope out of waiting and despair.

Hannah's son, her gift from God, is Samuel: this name is often interpreted as meaning 'God has heard'. God heard the cry of Hannah's heart as she prayed to him at Shiloh. Hannah prayed for a child and, when her prayer was answered:

'She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

(1 Samuel 1: 20.)

Hannah takes Samuel to Eli at Shiloh as soon as he is 'weaned' (maybe as young as 2 or 3 years old in those times) to give thanks to God. What a sacrifice she makes. We understand that this was the fulfilment of a promise, but can any of us imagine actually doing this? Samuel is a special gift from God to Hannah, and a special gift back to God, from Hannah. God is faithful and Hannah is faithful in fulfilling her promise.

Hannah's Song, in chapter 2 speaks of her joy, but also God's power. It speaks of her son, but also has a wider perspective - anticipating that God will reorder society in the interests of those who are poor and weak and have no standing. This song becomes the song of Mary in Luke 1: 46 -55, and the source for Luke's radical portrayal of Jesus. This song becomes a source of hope in a world where people can no longer believe the promises of rulers. It is a song which trusts in the powerful gifts of God.

Following Hannah's song, we hear of the sons of Eli, 'wicked men' with 'no regard for the Lord' we are told. There is an interesting contrast here between the boy Samuel and the sons of Eli (Hophni and Phinehas) who disobeyed the will of God and whose behaviour brought shame on their father and on their House.

Near the end of chapter 2 a 'man of God' comes to tell Eli that his sons are bringing shame on his House and on the call God made on the House of Eli, to minister before Him. Therefore, we hear in verse 35:

'I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always.'

The focus of Chapter 3 is not, however, on the ending announced for Eli but rather on the new beginning now to be brought into being for Samuel, gifted to God in obedience and raised in obedience.

Chapter 3, our passage for today, begins with God's call on Samuel. A well-known passage where we encounter the boy Samuel hearing a voice in the night calling his name. Samuel mistakes the voice for Eli and goes to him to see what is needed.

We have already been warned in verse 1 that 'In those days the word of the Lord was rare...' and that '...there were not many visions' so there is no air of expectation. Eli himself, although much older and wiser, doesn't recognise that it is God speaking to Samuel until Samuel has come to him three times. But he then gives Samuel the words he is to speak if God calls to him again. Samuel is totally dependent on Eli's wisdom and support.

The roles between the two of them are then reversed as Eli is deprived of the word of God and it is given to Samuel. Eli is now dependent on him to hear the word of God.

When Samuel responds to God's call, the message he hears is not expected - what an introduction to a prophetic calling, to have to deliver such a difficult message to Eli. Samuel learns at this early stage that his words will not always be easy, either for him to speak or for others to hear, but Samuel and Eli are obedient in the delivery of the message and the receipt of it. Samuel had been dedicated to God in obedience and Eli had nurtured him in obedience. The two now stand together in obedience to face the will of God.

The call of Samuel, in Samuel 3 is one of the great call narratives. The focus of the passage is not on what is ending for Eli but on what is beginning for Samuel. Samuel is the bearer of revelation and revelation is precious to God and not to be wasted or ignored.

Now our gospel passage for today brings us to another call narrative, Nathanael is 'called' by Philip to 'come and see' Jesus, as Philip describes him:

“..the one Moses wrote about in the law”

And, in turn, Nathanael responds to Jesus’ call declaring:

“ Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

We then hear the most amazing revelation from Jesus:

“You believe because I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that”.

He then added,

“Truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” (John 1: 50-51.)

The main lesson of this passage is clear and simple: Heaven stands open, and through Jesus Christ the reality of heaven and the presence of God becomes ccessible to everyone. This declaration is addressed to all of us and it is for everyone.

The reference to “angels ascending and descending” recalls Jacob’s dream, recounted in Genesis 28, when he saw a ladder set up between earth and heaven. Jesus is referencing what will be a well known story of faith to convey that God and the reality of the unseen world, have come near. God may seem beyond all thought and imagination, yet he has become present through his only son, Jesus Christ.

This image of Jesus as the door between heaven and earth provides a framework for our understanding of Jesus and his ministry.

And so, what is it that we are called to?

- We are called to respond to Jesus’ invitation to follow him.
- We are called to be like Jesus: to wait on God, to hope, to look past our fear, to trust in God and to respond to his call.

This year what will that look like for you, what will that look like for our church, for our community, for our nation and our world?

We cannot see or know the future but we can know that in our waiting we can call on God to guide and strengthen us.

We can know that as we move forward, we are held close to the heart of God, enfolded in his love and that he will walk with us through all the times ahead, for he is a faithful God.

Amen.

*+Sarah Bullock
Bishop of Shrewsbury*

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Elizabeth Chapman, Chris Clayton, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Alison Cox-Toplis, Martin Dewes, Chris Dickerson, Sonia Doidge, Colin Eastwood, David Edge, Robert Harris, James Knight, Robert McAllester-Jones, Matthew and Emmeline and their parents, Ruth and Andrew Martel, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter, Anthony Staples aged 7, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Judith Watson, Renee Wellings, Peter and Anne Whatson, Felicity Woodfield, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Julian & Wendy,

Those who have died

Bill Hill

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST JOHN

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

CHURCH NOTICES

Closing our churches for the time being.

After consultation with the churchwardens of both our churches and the St Michael's Standing committee we have decided to close both St Michael's and St John's for public worship for at least January. The most recent lockdown and rising numbers of Covid infections are obvious reasons for doing this. We want to ensure that everyone is safe in church and feels safe and it is understandable that, as we wait for the vaccine to be distributed, many members of our congregations will want to be very cautious. Closing our churches is something we do with a heavy heart but this seems to be the most sensible thing to do at the moment.

Each Sunday two services will be available live on zoom for people to join. At 8.00am there will be a Book of Common Prayer Communion service. At 10.00am there will be a Sunday Service which will include readings, hymns to join in, and a sermon. We hope that many people will attend. These kinds of services do at least give us the chance to "see" each other, support each other and maintain our fellowship together.

The link to these services will be sent out with the notices each week. Our usual service sheets will be on the website and will contain the Sunday readings.

Our Sunday evening zoom worship **will not** continue while there are morning services on zoom. At present we do not intend to record further sermons as there will be a sermon at the Sunday Service.

All of these arrangements will be reviewed towards the end of January.

Simon Baker

Rector of St Michael Lichfield and St John Wall

BIBLE STUDY IN LENT

We will be starting a new series of Bible Studies on the Wednesdays of Lent starting on **Wednesday 24 February until Wednesday 31st March.**

Each session will be on Zoom at 10.30am.

This year the gospel that we are mainly reading at our Sunday services is the Gospel of Mark. Our Lent Bible Study will focus on **The Passion of Jesus in Mark's Gospel.**

Jesus's death and resurrection lies at the very heart of our Christian faith and has done so from the very beginning. These sessions will give us an opportunity to focus on the passion story and its meaning for us in a way that we are not often able to do.

The zoom link will be sent out each week with the links for our services. There will also be a sheet with the Bible text and questions to think about available to download from our website.

Everyone is invited to join these sessions.

CHURCHES TOGETHER LENT GROUPS This year the Lent Groups will be via Zoom and will start after Ash Wednesday 17th February, lasting 6 weeks. We will be using the book 'Holy Habits' by Andrew Roberts £6:99, but with a possible 20% discount depending on how many books are ordered. If you are interested or need more information please contact me on 01543 251863 or brendaliptrot@outlook.com **I must know by 18th January**, so I can get the form back. Sorry it is such short notice. *Brenda*

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 18TH TO 22ND JANUARY

This will be led by St Chad's Church this year. Unfortunately, the planned service in church has had to be cancelled and it will now be a zoom service.

Please click on the links below to download the pamphlet the prayers for the whole week and the link to the zoom service.

Pamphlet

<https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/WPCU-2021-English-pamphlet-Final.pdf.pagespeed.ce.SnR5lgw9dp.pdf>

Zoom meeting.

Time: **Jan 22, 2021 07:15 PM**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84307237693?pwd=NVIkcFBHVW9hRDU4RlhYUmNjYXNKQT09>

Meeting ID: 843 0723 7693

Passcode: 046206

SUNDAY SERVICE 31ST JANUARY: CANDLEMAS

On Sunday 31st January we will celebrate Candlemas or the Feast of the Presentation in our 10.00am zoom service. As part of that service we would like everyone who attends to be able to light a candle. Please make sure that you have a candle available to light during the service. Something like a night light is probably best to ensure that you smoke alarm is not set off!

MU Members.

Our MU subs are due, this year they are £ 26. Could you pay by cheque please, made payable to St. Michael's MU. Thank you *Lynn*

FEBRUARY MAGAZINE

We shall try to deliver the Magazine in the normal way as much as possible .*Barbara Homewood*

COUNSELLING One result of this 3rd lockdown starting will be increased pressures on all of us, and many people are feeling anxious and depressed and are coping with a lot of extra stress and loss.

Phoenix Counselling Service is a small charity which for 5 years, has been providing counselling to adults living in Burntwood, Lichfield and the surrounding areas, who are not able to access counselling via the NHS and who cannot afford private counselling. Professionally trained counsellors provide a safe, confidential space to talk about your thoughts and feelings, and work through problems that you might be facing in your life. At present all the counselling is online or by telephone although we will offer face to face sessions when restrictions permit.

Contact details: www.phoenixcounselling-service.co.uk

email: phoenixcounselling2@gmail.com

Mobile: 07415517663

Best wishes, Rhoda Wharton

CHURCHES TOGETHER www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2021

£8.50

payable by cheque to
"P.C.C. of St, Michael and St. Mary".

NO PERSONAL CHEQUES PLEASE.

Barbara Homewood Tel 255909

THE FOODBANK is always happy to receive gifts of

- Tinned meat and fish
- Tinned fruit and vegetables, soup and beans
- Rice pudding and custard
- Instant coffee, tea, sugar, long life milk and fruit juice
- Packets of cereals, biscuits and snacks
- Pasta, rice and pasta sauce
- Jam

Items should be **at least 3 months in date** or the Foodbank is not allowed to issue them. *Maggie and David_01543 255308*

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 17th January: Epiphany 2

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Sunday Service	Zoom

Monday 18th January

All day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Tuesday 19th January

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
7.30pm	St Michael's PCC Meeting	Zoom

Wednesday 20th January

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Thursday 21st January

All day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Friday 22nd January

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Saturday 23rd January

Sunday 24th January: Epiphany 3

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Sunday Service	Zoom