

Prayers for 9th January 2022 from Jan Teale

Greetings and all good wishes for 2022 – may it be a happy and healthier time than last year. With the New Year comes a new church season: Epiphany – so that is going to be my topic for this Bulletin. I think most of us know that Epiphany recalls the visit of the Three Kings/Wise Men/Magi to the infant Jesus.

There are many customs and traditions around this festival, especially in the countries of Latin America, where January 6th is known as Three Kings Day. There, children put a box of grass or hay under their beds to feed the camels after their long journey. I suppose this is no stranger than putting out a mince pie and glass of sherry for Santa and carrots for Santa's reindeer on Christmas Eve! Well, we still do that in our house!

There is also the Three Kings Cake – its form and ingredients vary, but it always has a tiny baby Jesus baked within it and the person whose slice of cake contains it is the King or Queen of the Feast!

There are several Sundays in Epiphanytide – Epiphany can contain the Baptism of Christ and the celebration of various saints' days. Each denomination will decide how long it lasts, but certainly until Shrovetide.

Perhaps one of the most well-known Epiphany hymns is the one called 'As with gladness men of old'. I think the first verse of that hymn would make a lovely prayer for us now:

As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light; leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led to thee. Amen

I hope these words will help us through the whole of Epiphanytide. I pray that we all 'may evermore be led to thee'. God bless.

We remember and pray for the recently departed and we also think of and pray for all those who may feel sad and lonely, especially those who have lost family and friends in recent times and for whom life will never be the same again.

At this particularly difficult time caused by the Omicron variant of the Covid virus we think of and pray for all those working for the NHS and in healthcare as they strive under extreme pressure to give treatment and care to those most in need. We pray for all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit, whether at home, in a care home or in hospital, remembering and praying for those people who care for and comfort them in their time of need and those who strive to do so but cannot as they are separated from their loved ones by the Covid restrictions in place.

And we pray also for those whose anniversaries are commemorated in our memorial book this week: Mary Elizabeth Mellor, Ernest Mellor, Elizabeth Ann Driver, David Thomson, Hilda Allwood, Brian Greaves, Eileen Newman, David Griffiths, Joseph Charles Hodgson and Gladys V Oxspring. Amen