

SAFFRON WALDEN AND VILLAGES TEAM MINISTRY PRAYERS FOR SUNDAYS of CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY

This prayer sheet is specially designed for those who are praying at home during this time of Coronavirus. It covers services for the week after Christmas and during the season of Epiphany, with readings and suggested hymns for each week. With the exception of 27 December, the text of the readings will be set out in the Grapevine, which will be sent round each week as usual. We hope that this sheet will continue to connect you to the rhythm of our worship together.

You might like to light a candle, symbolising Jesus as the Light of the World: and to say the prayers and readings out loud. Remember that even if you are by yourself at home, you are still part of God's Church, praying across the world.

The Christmas season runs from the midnight service on Christmas Eve until the feast of the Epiphany on 6th January, celebrated on the nearest Sunday, which will this year be 3rd January. The season of Epiphany then ends with the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (sometimes called Candlemas) on 2nd February, which we will celebrate on Sunday 31st January.

Our focus moves from the baby in the stable to the ways in which Jesus was shown forth and recognised – by the Kings, then at his Baptism, by his disciples, in his first miracle and finally by Simeon and Anna in the Temple.

Introduction

We gather together, united in purpose though separate in place, in the name of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

*We say together (or why not **sing!**) an opening hymn: see pages 5-15.*

The Lord is here.

His Spirit is with us.

We have come together as the family of God in this community. And especially today we thank you, heavenly Father, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ at Christmas and for the ways in which he was recognised by others and can be known to us now. Help us to pray to you in faith, to sing your praise with gratitude, and to listen to your word with eagerness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

The grace of God has dawned upon the world through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own.

Let us confess our sins:

Lord Jesus, illuminate the darkness in our hearts:

Lord have mercy *Lord have mercy*

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to your saving love:

Christ have mercy *Christ have mercy*

Lord Jesus, unstop our ears to hear your living word:

Lord have mercy *Lord have mercy*

Hearing God's forgiveness

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.**

As God's forgiven people, we say

Thanks be to God for his endless grace.

Readings *We now follow the readings on the Grapevine:*

Collect (the special prayer for each Sunday)

December 27th (Christmas I):

First Reading: Isaiah 61: 10 – 62: 3; Gospel: Luke 2: 15-21

January 3rd (Epiphany):

First Reading: Isaiah, 60: 1-6; Gospel: Matthew 2: 1-12

January 10th (Baptism of Christ)

First Reading: Genesis 1: 1-5; Gospel: Mark 1: 4-11

January 17th (2nd Sunday of Epiphany):

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3: 1-10 (11-20); Gospel: John 1: 43-51

January 24th (3rd Sunday of Epiphany)

First Reading: Genesis 14: 17-20; Gospel: John 2: 1-11

January 31st (Presentation of Christ in the Temple):

First Reading: Malachi 3: 1-5; Gospel: Luke 2: 22 - 40

Reflection *You may wish to read the Reflection on the Grapevine. In a moment of quiet, think what message this may have for you, and ask God to help you live it out in your life this week.*

We declare our faith together

**We believe and trust in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.
This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

You may like to base your own prayers around the themes below: feel free to expand and to use your own words

Father, we thank you for the coming of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Just as his glory was revealed to others at his first coming, may we recognise him now and come to trust him in our daily lives. At the start of this New Year, may his coming bring us hope for the days and months ahead.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for your Church throughout the world, that we may find ways to show forth his glory and his love to others. We pray for all the people, communities and churches of this Saffron Walden and Villages Team Ministry, and for our Bishops. We pray for Jeremy and Alison as they leave familiar people and places and prepare to join us here.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for your world; for all world leaders faced with difficult decisions; and for peace. We long for conflict to cease and pray for those who suffer oppression and injustice to have hope of deliverance. We think of those who have had to leave their homes, and of all refugees. Help us to see how we can play a part in supporting them and giving them hope.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We thank you for the work of all who have brought us hope in the form of new vaccines, and pray for all involved in rolling this out. We continue to pray for those suffering from COVID-19, especially in those places where medical resources are few, and for those who remain fearful. May we all act responsibly in order to protect each other.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for our communities in town and villages. Bless all who are sick or in any kind of need. Bless our families, friends and neighbours, both near and far, especially those in need of any kind whom we name before you in the silence of our hearts Hold them in your loving arms, and be with them always.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

In a moment of silence, offer to God any other needs on your heart.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sharing God's Peace

Christ is our peace. If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

The old has passed away; behold, everything has become new.

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

As you say this, hold in your mind all who are joining in these prayers today.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray together as Jesus has taught us

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

We ask God's grace for the week ahead

Heavenly Father, sustain us in our joys and in our anxieties. Enfold us in your peace in our waking and in our sleeping, and may we know your presence with us now and always: in the name of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

We say (or sing!) a final hymn: see pages 5-15.

Christ our Lord, to whom kings bowed down in worship and offered gifts, reveal to us his glory and pour upon us the riches of his grace, and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, be with us all now and evermore.

As we await our coming Saviour, may we go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

SUNDAY 27th December

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her king;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
Let us our songs employ;
While field and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders, and wonders of his love.

--

Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth

*Come and worship Christ the new-born King;
Come and worship, worship Christ, the new-born King.*

Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant light:

Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar:
Seek the great Desire of Nations;
ye have seen his natal star:

Saints before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
in his temple shall appear:

Though an infant now we view him,
he shall fill his Father's throne,
gather all the nations to him
ev'ry knee shall then bow down:

*Come and worship Christ the new-born King;
Come and worship, worship Christ, the new-born King.*

SUNDAY 3rd January 2021

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.

As with joyful steps they sped,
to that lowly manger-bed,
there to bend the knee before
him whom heav'n and earth adore,
so my we, with willing feet,
ever seek thy mercy-seat.

As their precious gifts they laid,
at thy manger roughly made,
so may we with holy joy,
pure, and free from sin's alloy
all our costliest treasures bring
Christ, to thee, our heav'nly king.

Holy Jesu, ev'ry day
keep us in the narrow way;
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heav'nly country bright
need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown,
thou its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
alleluias to our King.

1. Brightest and best
of the suns of the morning,
dawn on our darkness
and lend us thine aid;
star of the east,
the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant
redeemer is laid.

2. Cold on his cradle
the dew-drops are shining;
low lies his head
with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore him
in slumber reclining
Maker and Monarch
and Saviour of all.

3. Say shall we yield him,
in costly devotion,
odours of Edom,
and off'rings divine,
gems of the mountain,
and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest
or gold from the mine?

4. Vainly we offer
each humble oblation,
vainly with gifts
would his favour secure:
richer by far
is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God
are the prayers of the poor.

SUNDAY 10th January 2021 (Baptism of Christ)

Lord of our life,
and God of our salvation,
star of our night,
and hope of ev'ry nation,
hear and receive thy Church's supplication,
Lord God almighty.

Lord, thou canst help
when earthly armour faileth,
Lord, thou canst save
when deadly sin assaileth;
Christ, o'er thy rock
nor death nor hell prevaieth;
grant us thy peace, Lord.

Peace in our hearts,
our evil thoughts assuaging;
peace in thy Church,
where people are engaging;
peace, when the world
its busy war is waging:
calm all our raging.

Grant us thy grace
through trial and temptation,
grant us thy truth,
thy promise of salvation,
grant us thy peace
in ev'ry heart and nation,
and in thy heaven.

Come down, O love Divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with
thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it,
thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes
in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round,
the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become
mine inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings
weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass
the power of human telling;
nor can we guess its grace,
till we become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit
makes his dwelling.

SUNDAY 17th January 2021 (Calling the disciples)

Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult
of our life's wild, restless sea;
day by day, his sweet voice soundeth,
saying 'Christian, follow me'.

As of old, St Andrew heard it
by the Galilean lake,
turned from home and toil and kindred,
leaving all for his dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship
of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us,
saying 'Christian, love me more.'

In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
that we love him more than these.

Jesus calls us: by thy mercies,
Saviour, make us hear thy call,
give our hearts to thine obedience,
serve and love thee best of all.

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you, and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind,
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare,
will you let me answer prayer
in you, and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the pris'ners free,
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you, and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside,
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around
through my touch and sight and sound
in you, and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

SUNDAY 24th January 2021 (First sign: water to wine)

Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesus, Lord, to thee we raise,
manifested by the star
to the sages from afar;
branch of royal David's stem,
in thy birth at Bethlehem;
anthems be to thee addressed:
God in man made manifest.

Manifest at Jordan's stream,
prophet, priest and King supreme,
and at Cana wedding guest,
in thy Godhead manifest,
manifest in pow'r divine,
changing water into wine;
anthems be to thee addressed:
God in man made manifest.

Manifest in making whole,
palsied limbs and fainting soul,
manifest in valiant fight,
quelling all the devil's might,
manifest in gracious will,
ever bringing good from ill;
anthems be to thee addressed:
God in man made manifest.

Sun and moon shall darkened be,
stars shall fall, the heav'ns shall flee;
Christ will then like lightning shine,
all will see his glorious sign.
All will then the trumpet hear;
all will see the judge appear;
thou by all will be confessed:
God in man made manifest.

Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
mirrored in thy holy word;
may we imitate thee now,
and be pure, as pure art thou;
that we like to thee may be
at thy great Epiphany,
and may praise thee, ever blest,
God in man made manifest.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence praise.
in deeper reverence praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.
rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!
interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the stain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace, the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desires
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm.
O still small voice of calm.

SUNDAY 31st January 2021 (Presentation of Christ)

1. O worship the Lord
in the beauty of holiness;
bow down before him,
his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience,
and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him,
the Lord is his name.

2. Low at his feet lay
thy burden of carefulness
high on his heart
he will bear it for thee,
comfort thy sorrows,

and answer thy prayerfulness,
guiding thy steps
as may best for thee be.

3. Fear not to enter
his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth
thou wouldst reckon as thine:
truth in its beauty,
and love in its tenderness,
these are the off'rings
to lay on his shrine.

4. These, though we bring them
in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept
for the name that is dear;
mornings of joy give
for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling
and hope for our fear

1. Faithful vigil ended,
watching, waiting cease;
Master, grant your servant
his discharge in peace.

2. All the Spirit promised,
all the Father willed,
now these eyes behold it
perfectly fulfilled.

3. This your great deliv'rance
sets your people free;
Christ, their light, uplifted
all the nations see.

4. Christ, your people's glory!
watching, doubting, cease;
grant to us your servants
our discharge in peace.