

NEWSLETTER

8th January 2026



"The Dream of the Magi" by He Qi

Dear Everyone - Greeting to you all and wishing you a Happy New Year

Epiphany: As we celebrate Epiphany and think of our Orthodox friends who celebrate Christmas at his time (January 6th), we remember the example of the Magi who had the courage to disobey Herod's orders (Mt 2:1-12) and take the right path. May we always do the same in our present time.



The magi inquiring of Herod the location of the King of the Jews (mosaic, Saint Mark's Basilica, Venice)

It is quite hard to keep wishing everyone "Happy New Year" in the midst of relentlessly bad news from one country and on to another without any let up isn't it. It is also hard to be full of hope when we know other countries and their people are suffering in so many different ways. Like the psalmists who always knew how to put their feelings directly to God and didn't mince their words, they approached God completely unafraid to talk in unrestrained language about the situation in which they and their people found themselves. They lamented out-loud, voiced anger, metaphorically waved their fists in the air, demanded to know why whatever has happened to them happened and slated their enemies. Their expressions of protests and accusations were crucial to the way they felt and, if we are honest, the way we feel too at this moment, except we are often too polite to address God like they did- and maybe we should! Reading several of the Psalms of Lament, I couldn't help feeling how apt they are to our present challenging time; *psalm 22: "My*

God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest”.

In her book, **“Listening to the Music of the Soul”, the Bishop of Gloucester, Guli Francis Dehqani**, says, “when we cannot find the right words for ourselves, use the psalms, because they have them. Their words become agents of transformation for us and help give us courage to protest about injustice”. Bishop Guli knows a great deal about fear and injustice as she was a refugee from Iran, where her father was of the Christian community there and a bishop. The leaders at that time wanted to kill him but instead shot and killed her young brother, so the family fled to the United Kingdom when she was 14 years old. Now she is a highly respected and loved Bishop who speaks from the experience of knowing what it is like to be a refugee. There are several members of our own congregation who will resonate with Bishop Guli’s experiences. But, in the book, she speaks of “Hope” and never giving up on the possibility of new beginnings in our lives and those of others. She tells us to “resist the worst of fear by holding on to Hope by searching actively for the signs”. That is surely what we must do too. Her book is inspirational. I recommend it to you, not just because she writes in such a way it strengthens you as a reader but because she talks about the importance of creativity, of the arts and music that strengthens our souls and minds. She also suggests those pieces of music that are her favourites, while encouraging you to think of those which are yours. I have a spare copy of her book if anyone would like to share it and then pass it onto others. It would be so good to discuss what you think of it.



By Bishop Guli Francis –Dehqani
pub by SPCK

Ibezim’s Birthday: Sunday was Ibezim’s birthday celebration. We wished him Happy Birthday and said prayers for a good year ahead. At the end of our first Sunday Service (Epiphany) for 2026. Ibezim said a prayer for our church and all who attend it. It was to wish us well with many good things to see us through the year, like Hope, Strength, Faith, Health and much more. Ibezim told us it was his custom to do this at any church he was in at this time of the year. It was a beautiful thing to do and much appreciated.



Jenny's Intercessions: Jenny's intercessions (below) focused on the word, "New", not just because it is a new year but because, as she says, the word appears many times in the Bible, particularly in Revelation 21: 5, where Jesus, the one who was seated on the throne, says "See, I am making all things new". We pray constantly at this fractious and difficult time in so many places, that indeed, "all things are made new". It might be helpful if the intercessions below can be part of your daily prayers, with our thoughts, our requests and thanks can be inserted in the spaces.

Sunday school: While not everyone has returned from their Christmas holidays, our Sunday school children gave us a rousing song in which we all joined. They have lovely clear voices and sung, "This is the day the Lord has made" with great joy.



Thanks to Onyeka for the photographs.

Listening and Learning, Bible Study: The date of the next session is Thursday January 15th at 6.30pm

Coffee: As usual our coffee morning is from 10.30am-12noon. Do come and join us and enjoy coffee, cake and a chat.

Toddler Group: The Toddler group has resumed after their Christmas holidays.

Malcolm Guite's Somber Sonnet: It is unlike Malcolm Guite to write a sonnet of such a somber and depressed nature. But, he gets the tone of the nativity just right, linking the birth with what is happening to many new born children and their families today and what is causing it. Every line holds a truth now as it was then. And we ask, "will anything ever change?". We remember "Hope".

Bishop Marriann Budde's Christmas Sermon: Where is hope to be found? Continuing on with the theme of " Hope", this is a question many of us have been asking for some time. Before Christmas, the Bishop of Washington, (the bishop who preached at President Trumps inauguration ceremony and made him so cross),

was asked by many, “Where is hope to be found”. As a result, she based her Christmas message around that very question. It is printed below.

Out of interest what would your word for the New Year be? We already have “**New**” and “**Hope**”. Which word would you add to them?

January’s eco-tip from A Rocha - Bird Watch: Although the weather is cold and treacherous, the birds are still flying around and singing, which makes me think it is really Spring until I look outside! Jenny has sent us information about the **The RSPB’s Big Garden Birdwatch (Friday 23-Sunday 25 January)**. This is the world’s largest garden wildlife survey! Last year, nearly 600,000 people took part and over nine million birds were counted. We’ve lost a staggering 38 million birds from UK skies in the last 60 years. With birds facing so many challenges, it’s more important than ever to get involved in the Birdwatch. To take part, spend one hour counting the birds you see in one location – your garden, balcony or a local park. Submit your findings to the RSPB. You can download a free guide and ID chart to help you identify the birds you spot on the RSPB website. Find out more at: rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch For more practical ways to enjoy, nurture and defend nature, sign up to A Rocha UK’s Wild Christian email: arocha.org.uk/wild-christian

Is this something our Sunday School children might like to join in with and let us know how they got on? Last year we talked a great deal about the seasons of creation and valuing nature; this is one way of doing it.

I am sorry some of the pieces here are a bit late, but as I have been away and missed writing the Christmas and New Year newsletters, this is by way of a catch up.

With Love and Good Wishes - Sally

Intercessions 4 January 2026 - Jenny

As we begin this new year I’m going to base our prayers around the word ‘**new**’. It appears in so many places throughout the Bible, and there’s a wonderful verse in Revelation 21: 5, where Jesus, the one who was seated on the throne, says ‘See, I am making all things new’.

As I pray through the following words I’m going to pause at the end of each phrase so we can each reflect silently on what we’ve just heard and make it our own prayer:

God of all time,
 Who makes all things new, we bring before you the year now ending
 For life full and good,
 For opportunities recognised and taken,
 For love known and shared,
 We thank you.....
 Where we have fallen short,
 Forgive us.....
 When we worry over what is past,
 Free us.....
 As we begin again
 And take our first steps into the future,
 Where nothing is safe and certain,
 Except you,

we ask for the courage of the wise men
who simply went and followed a star.....
We ask for their wisdom,
In choosing to pursue the deepest truth,
Not knowing where they would be led.....
In the year to come, God of all time,
Be our help and company.....
Hold our hands as we journey onwards.....
And may your dream of shalom,
Where all will be at peace,
Be our guiding star.....

Amen

Francis Brienen, from The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer, no 933

God of new beginnings, of hope and deliverance,
Dawn us with fresh opportunities,
Equip us for new tasks,
Fill us with eager longing,
Thrill us with fresh starts,
That with the past behind us we may look to all that lies ahead
With faith in Jesus,
Hope in you and love for all.

Amen

<https://www.cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/about-us/news/praying-in-the-new-year/>

We end our prayers with words from a poem called 'New Year 1945', by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian, written while he was in jail for his resistance to the Nazis. He was executed in April that year.

'With every power for good to stay and guide me,
comforted and inspired beyond all fear,
I'll live these days with you in thought beside me,
and pass, with you, into the coming year.

.....

While all the powers of Good aid and attend us,
boldly we'll face the future, be it what may.
At even, and at morn, God will befriend us,
and oh, most surely each new year's day!

May it be so. Amen

<https://artandtheology.org/2022/12/30/dietrich-bonhoeffer-hymn-new-year/>



*Painting of Jesus,
with permission, by Emma Major,
poet, artist, disability champion, wheelchair user.*

Nativity by Malcolm Guite

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,
But he is with a million displaced people
On the long road of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on that road,
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,
And death squads spread their curse across the world.



*Nativity models handmade from recycled materials
from Dar es Salaam Tanzania Disability Workshop.*

The Cost and the Gift of Hope at Christmas MARIANN BUDDÉ – Bishop of Washington

DEC 22, 2025

“Alongside Christian leaders everywhere, I’m thinking about what I will say on Christmas Eve at a time when we all yearn for a message of hope. Those of us called to preach at Christmas are praying hard now that, through the mystery of grace, we might be messengers of hope.

We do so amid daily news of violence so shocking and so frequent that unless we have a personal connection, our senses are numbed to it. Yet when the violence touches those we love, whether close in or across the globe, our life freezes in grief while the rest of the world carries on. And we wonder, where is hope to be found?

It is the question I am most frequently asked these days: *Bishop, what gives you hope?*

Those who ask are often struggling, for good reason. To be people of hope is to risk disappointment; to be people of hope demands that we place ourselves in seemingly hopeless situations; to be people of hope is to courageously face an uncertain future.

We can't spare ourselves the cost of hope.

To be people of hope, we need to tap deeper spiritual wells to find the source of hope that enables us to persevere. This deeper source gives us eyes to see glimpses of light amid the darkness, and even when we see no light at all, to trust that light exists. The deepest, most lasting hope doesn't depend on us alone; it comes as a gift to receive and to share.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:5

As Christians, we celebrate Jesus' birth every year, no matter what, as a reminder that God comes to us and is with us, no matter what. It's an act of audacious faith in the light that shines on.

With God, we needn't pretend to be hopeful. At Christmas, God invites us to open our hearts to receive hope, and to practice hope, leaning on the sacred traditions that inspired our ancestors to keep the light of hope alive and pass it on to us.

Nor need we be shy in our Christmas celebrations—we need them, as a reminder that there is goodness and love all around us to savor and protect.

For God is with us in joy, too.

Whatever life asks of you now, may you receive the gift of hope this Christmas.

Know that the light of Christ shines on, in and through you; in and through us all.

A friend sent this poem wishing every blessing at Epiphany from her church. The poem is by, Jan Richardson, imagining the wise women who came to Jesus and Mary at his birth. The art is by Maya Telford. I thought you might like it.



Wise women also came.

The fire burned in their wombs long before they saw the flaming star in the sky.
They walked in shadows, trusting the path would open under the light of the moon.
Wise women also came, seeking no directions, no permission from any king.

They came by their own authority, their own desire, their own longing.
They came in quiet, spreading no rumors, sparking no fears to lead to innocents' slaughter,
to their sister Rachel's inconsolable lamentations.

Wise women also came, and they brought useful gifts: water for labor's washing,
fire for warm illumination, a blanket for swaddling.

Wise women also came, at least three of them, holding Mary in the labor,
crying out with her in the birth pangs, breathing ancient blessings into her ear.

Wise women also came, and they went, as wise women always do, home a different way.

I wonder, if you had been a Wise Woman, what would you have brought as a gift?

How We Are

As always, we send our love and prayers to all those who are sick. Please continue to pray for them that they gain in strength and good health; that God's healing hands may be upon them.

We were so sad to hear from Ruth that her father died in Wales just before Christmas. We think of Ruth, who is caring for her mother, for Thomas and Elizabeth and send them our love and prayers. His funeral will take place in Wales on Thursday 15th January.

We continue to pray for Festus who is recovering well from a knee operation and give thanks for it. We pray for Daniel, for Keith, Relia and Myfanwy; for Anita Houghton, Chuba Agbim, for Eunice Adiele, recovering from an eye operation, for Gideon Onwutalu, Sir Edmund Onochie, Rose Ochwada. Please keep Kelly's father John in your prayers.

We hold all the above in our hearts that they may be filled with God's healing love.

Please continue to let us know of family members and friends who are sick and would welcome our prayers, either by WhatsApp, email, Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk or by phone, 020 8455 1873

Topic: Church Wardens' Personal Meeting Room

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/8585545365?pwd=em85aDF5ZmJ5ZkVlb0x0DaDhY2paUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 554 5365

Passcode: J4FbKf

Reader:

Intercession:

Hospitality:

Eucharist Minister:

AV Desk:

Contact details:

Parish Priest: Revd Kamran Bhatti Office Tel: 020 8455 1873 Website: www.gg-pc.co.uk

Date	Bible Passage	Readers	Intercessor	Refreshments	Eucharistic Minister	AV Desk	Warden on duty	Service leader	Preacher
11/01/26	Isaiah 42:1-4 Acts 10:34-4.3	Conny Sim	Alexis	Naila	Tim/Naila	Onyeka	Tony/Bilan	TBC	Rev Kamran
18/01/26	Psalm 40:1-4 I Corinthians 1:1-19	Andrew Abi	Simon	Alexis	Nehar/Nwadi	Shaniv	Ifey/Shaniv	Jenny	Rev Ibezim
25/01/26 Bring & Share	Psalm 27:1,4-9 I Corinthians 1:10-18	Nwenna ka Dozie	Kai	Cynthia/Chinwe	Sally/Tony	Daniel	Nehar/Sohail		Rev Kamran
01/02/26	TBC	Keith Sim	Jenny	Alexis	Daniel/Ezim	Dozie	Tony/Bilan	Nehar	
08/02/26	TBC	Dozie Andrew	Nwando	Silvia	Ifeyinwe/Onyeka	Daniel	Ifey/Shaniv		
15/02/26	TBC	Sohail Elizabeth	Tony	Bilan	Tim/Naila	Onyeka	Nehar/Sohail	Alexis	
22/02/26 Bring & Share	TBC	Cynthia Guy	Nehar	Cynthia/Chinwe	Nehar/Nwadi	Shaniv	Tony/Bilan		
01/03/26	TBC	Conny Sim	Rose	Christina	Sally/Tony	Ruth	Ifey/Shaniv	Nehar	
08/03/26	TBC	Andrew Abi	Alexis	Nora	Daniel/Ezim	Onyeka	Nehar/Sohail		
15/03/26	TBC	Keith Elizabeth	Simon	Naila	Ifeyinwe/Onyeka	Shaniv	Tony/Bilan	Jenny	
22/03/26	TBC	Sam	Kai	Cynthia/Chinwe	Nehar/Nwadi	Daniel	Nehar/Sohail		