

EPIPHANY 01-01-2023 The Revd Lorna Green

Isaiah 60:1-6; Ps 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

Have you heard the one about what would have happened if there had been Three Wise Women from the East, instead of three wise men? The wise women would have asked for directions before ending up in Jerusalem; they would have got to Bethlehem on time and assisted with the birth; they would have cleaned the stable; they would have brought nappies and more appropriate baby gifts, and probably a casserole!

As I'm sure you know, the Bible doesn't actually say there were three kings or wise men: no number or gender is given, and they are described as astrologers or magi. In the Middle Ages the Western Church decided there were three of them, and gave them names: the Eastern Church has 12 of them.

Tradition tends to fill in the gaps that history leaves out, but that doesn't mean tradition is worthless or meaningless- far from it. Our Anglican faith depends on Scripture, tradition, and reason, recognising the importance of all three.

This parish has been in existence less than forty years, but has developed its own traditions and ways of doing things.

This is a parish that sits somewhere in the middle of liturgical practice- neither very 'high' nor very 'low'. This parish values the scriptures, so we listen to psalms and readings every Sunday and our liturgies and preaching are firmly based in scripture.

This parish is concerned about social justice and takes seriously Jesus' instructions that his followers should feed the hungry and care for the poor and disadvantaged. This parish has a tradition of giving away 10% of its income to charities and aid agencies, which is a wonderful tradition that I hope will always continue.

Some traditions we may have taken for granted have had to change as the times have changed- even in as relatively short a period as forty years.

Most parish churches are no longer packed to the rafters on Sundays, and many no longer have any Sunday School because no children attend.

The most significant disrupter this century has been the global pandemic, which changed everything almost overnight- and which is still very much with us. My first Holy Week and Easter in this parish saw us in lockdown, unable to meet for worship at all.

I am proud of the resilience shown by parishioners as we stumbled along together, learning to do things differently.

In some ways we are still in a recovery phase following the disruptions of the past three years; I wonder what the future will look like for this parish and for the church in general.

Looking back there are many highlights since June 2019, when I first began as your Rector. These are in no particular order:

- The parents' & toddler group
- Youth group
- Toddler Jam
- Godly Play- training & gathering resources
- Refurbishing the old crying room
- Working with the fundraisers on events
- Stalls at Poynter Market

- Replacing the old patio with a lovely new one complete with lighting and blinds
- The Fashion Show
- The Sustainability Course, leading to the Recycling Hub
- Establishing a link with Grandparents raising Grandchildren
- Having Grahame as our theological student on placement
- Working with an engaged parish council, and a creative, efficient administration assistant
- Times with the Friendship Group, Men's Breakfast and Mother's Union
- Setting up live-streaming
- I am thrilled that the parish continues to support the Balga Breakfast Club, Roseworth Primary School, and CARAD.

I leave here knowing there is more to do- more I wanted to do- but also knowing I need to hand on the baton to the next person. My prayer is that the interregnum will be no longer than necessary while giving enough time for you to discern where God is leading you, and what is most important for the people of Carine-Duncaig.

I'm not retiring, but I am taking up a role that is far less demanding in terms of time. A full-time parish priest is expected to work 6 days or 48 hours per week; most of us work many more hours than that. As an aged-care chaplain with Amana Living I will work just two days per week, which will mean I can be on hand to support our daughter Sarah when needed.

Parish ministry is only really effective when parishioners take an active part in it; the priest is only one person, who can only be in one place at a time but who also doesn't have all the gifts and abilities required by the Body of Christ. Every part of the body is vital to its thriving. A parish needs people with gifts of all kinds- music, administration, hospitality, pastoral care, prayer, ministry to young people- creative gifts as well as practical gifts like gardening and cooking.

People who are not as physically active as they once were have other gifts to offer; praying for the world, the church, the sick; keeping in touch with others by phone, for example. Every single person has something to contribute to the life of the church- don't ever think you don't matter.

It matters that you turn up to church, that you show up for parish events, that you put your hand up for a spot on the roster. You matter to the Body of Christ.

Imagine a dark church- no lights, just midnight black. Now imagine people filing in, each carrying a lighted candle. Every single candle adds to the light that eventually fills the church, every one is needed or the church isn't quite as light and bright as it could be. The light you bring is vital!

We have just celebrated Christmas and New Year's Eve, and most of us have probably spent more money and consumed more food and drink than is strictly necessary.

We probably received more presents than we really needed, including some that may be of no use to us at all.... And today we celebrate the Epiphany- when the Magi saw the baby Jesus and worshipped him.

We see the Christ-child in his vulnerability; we see wise men and kings who are frightened of who he is; and we see mysterious strangers overwhelmed with joy and worshipping him.

As we begin this New Year, may we look for and find the glory of God in unexpected places. May we share our gifts and our joy with those in need, and may we open our arms in welcome to the world around us. The Lord be with you.