

St. Mary's Church Cubbington



Sunday 17th January

Sunday Message 17th January

Greetings once again from the vicarage

And I do hope that you are all keeping well and safe.

It is with a heavy heart that I have decided along with the members of our PCC committee to close the church for worship whilst we are in lockdown as from **this Sunday (17th January)**.



This follows advice from our Bishop and Archdeacon and so along with many other churches in our diocese there will be no services for a while.

This is of course to help keep our church family and the wider community safe.

I listened to a medical expert speaking about the new strain of the virus on the news the other morning –

And he said, “The best defence you have against this virus is your front door, because every time you step outside of it you are putting yourself and others at risk.”

I thought he spoke a lot of sense.

We will open the church each day from **10am until 2pm** for Individual Private Individual Prayer as usual.

Personally, I've had some good news this week; I have a date for my surgery.

It is **Sunday 24th January** which is next Sunday.

It will be good to finally get into hospital and begin the treatment.

I will be travelling to London very early on Sunday morning and I will be at the London Bridge Hospital which is on the banks of the Thames.



In preparation for the surgery, I am now self-isolating, which means I'm afraid you won't see me in the village and I'm living in a separate part of the vicarage to Sam and Sophie has moved in with her brother.

Today is the Second Sunday of Epiphany and our readings are **1 Samuel chapter 3 verses 1 – 10** and the gospel passage is **John chapter 1 verses 43 – end**.

Our first reading takes us way back in time to around 1200 - 1300BC to the days of the Judges.

Because Israel suffered from corrupt priests and judges, the people wanted a king. They wanted to be organized like the surrounding nations.

Though it was against His original purpose, God chose a King for them.

If Samuel had his way there would have been no King Saul or King David.

God was King, and Samuel delivered God's messages to the people.

As a boy Samuel never really belonged to his parents.

He was God's boy from the beginning.

Samuel's mother Hannah saw that.

Hannah was one of Elkanah's two wives.

The family lived in the village of Ramah in the hills of Ephraim which was a tribal territory in what is now central Israel.

Hannah couldn't have children, as Elkanah's other wife cruelly reminded her.

But one day, when the family made their annual trip to the tent worship centre in the nearby hill town of Shiloh, Hannah went alone to the tent.

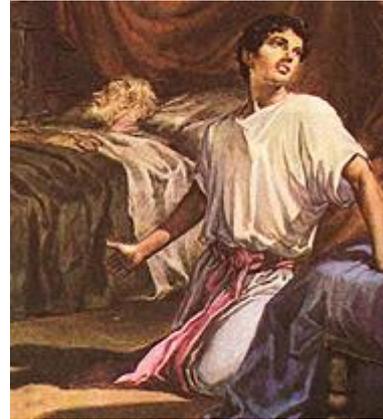
Weeping, she prayed for a son, vowing to give the boy back to God in full-time service.

Samuel was born within a year.

Hannah kept him for a few years and then took him to the worship centre and entrusted him to Eli, the high priest.

Each year when the family went to visit the worship centre Hannah would take him a new coat.

Our passage today picks up the story of God speaking to Samuel.



Samuel listens to God

Although God had spoken audibly with Moses and Joshua his word became rare during the three centuries rule by the judges.

God had become quiet during Eli's time probably because if his own sons were anything to go by – then many of those around them were of the same attitude.

Eli's two sons were crooked; they took bribes and let money do the talking.

They either refused to listen to God or allowed greed to get in the way of any communication with Him.



Hannah giving Samuel to Eli

Listening and responding is vital in any relationship and especially with God.

As we know God does not always use the sound of a human voice like he did with Samuel – but He speaks through His Word.

To receive His message, we must be ready to listen and then act on what He tells us.

Being ready to say like Samuel did “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”.



Thinking of my own spiritual journey and particularly towards ordination there were many times when God spoke to me, although I didn't always know that it was Him.

Sometimes when I was open to hear Him I would be drawn to a certain passage in the bible, -

it was as if God had taken a highlighter pen and marked a few words or verses.

I would read them over and over and wonder - what do they mean and how and what do I do now.

Like Samuel to begin with I didn't think it could be God I thought it must be something else.

This continued for several years and it taught me that God has patience, and He is persistent and if it is His will, it will happen one day.

I have for many years used daily bible notes which give a bible passage along with a few thoughts and questions to read and think about.

Many times, I have had a specific thought on my mind, only to find that when I open my bible notes the answer was there in the passage.

Some people might say “well, that’s a coincidence” and I agree that could happen on occasions – but when it continues to happen again and again you realise that it is far more than a coincidence - and you start to wonder – is it really God?

However, it still took a lot more ‘coincidences’ to convince me - and for me to fully understand what God wanted me to do!

I think eventually He got fed up with my doubts and my lack of faith or knowing –

and that is when I had the most beautiful and breath-taking vision of Him.

Something that I will never forget.

I have shared this with some of you, so sorry if I am repeating what you have already heard.

I was in church with my eyes closed praying.

I don’t know why, but I had this urge to simply pray to see Jesus’ face.

After a short while, I saw what I believe - and know to be Jesus.

He was on a beach walking towards me with His arms open wide.



I was frightened to move or open my eyes in case I lost Him, and so I just sat still staring and enjoying being in His presence.

This experience went on for some time as a friend was waiting in the church for me.

Eventually it was time to leave the church and my friend said, "You look as if you were enjoying yourself".

That was an understatement if ever I heard one!

I've thought a lot about this experience since and – even though I prayed to see Jesus' face – I saw his whole body but not His face?

The conclusion that I've come to is that when we get close to God and allow Him, -

He shows what we ask, but only as much as He believes we need.

The rest is for us to continue to seek and when He thinks we are ready and or in need He will give us more.

I am continuing to seek more of and about Him as I know you all are.

My prayer is that you will all come to know and see our Lord in whatever form He chooses.

But in the meantime be like Samuel and be ready to say "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening"

Amen.

Something to think about

I would suggest that you think about your own spiritual journey, particularly trying to remember the times when you think/know that God spoke to you and in what way.

Ask God to speak to you this coming week and listen for Him.



PS. I would like to thank you all for your most generous and loving support. I've always known that St. Mary's and Cubbington is a caring community.

**You have demonstrated that once again to me.
Thank you and may God Bless You.**



**The collect for
The Second Sunday of Epiphany**

Eternal Lord,
our beginning and our end,
bring us with the whole creation
to your glory, hidden through past ages
and made known
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SUNDAY 17th JANUARY
Epiphany 2

Altar Flowers: Sue, Anthony and Adam **SIMMONS**

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**SERVICE TODAY**

Invitation only  
**10.00am: Common Worship**

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Due to the urgent and serious nature of Revd. Graham's mouth cancer, the family and Revd. Graham have decided to seek the help of a private leading Mouth Cancer Surgeon, Mr Alastair Fry in London.

As the cost of surgery and aftercare will be considerable, myself and other congregation members have suggested that we would like to help by making a contribution towards the cost of his treatment.

If you would like to help with a donation you can either:-
send your donation to Sue Simmons, 213 Valley Road, Lillington, Leamington Spa CV32 7SL
or if you wish to have your donation collected ring 01926 312319
all cheques to be made payable to '**St. Mary's Church**'.

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**Regular Prayer for Graham**

Jo King is organising a regular Prayer time for Graham which will be on every Tuesday afternoon at 5.00 pm. She is aware that not everybody has access to a computer so suggests you join in prayer at the same time.

Jo King is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Prayer Meeting for Graham  
Time: Jan 12, 2021 05:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84968950634?pwd=QzZhZTFtY05PcWFYWFVpZTNnazZqZz09>

Meeting ID: 849 6895 0634  
Passcode: 8HGa5W

For any of your family, friends  
and neighbours  
who have access to the internet,  
you might like to suggest  
that they look at the church's website  
where they will be able to see this message  
and other useful information.

Also, anyone you know with  
Primary Age school children will find stories  
from 'Open The Book'.

Tell them to Google  
St. Mary's Church Cubbington.