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**Weekly Letter – 7 January 2024**

**Matthew 2:1-12**

**Wisdom: learning by your mistakes, or learning from the mistakes of others?**

You would expect a new king to be born in a palace. You wouldn't expect turning up to pay homage would have caused such fear. At least it led to being pointed in the direction of Bethlehem. Although the decision not to go back to Herod led to unimaginable reprisals.

Such things to ponder: it was their study of the stars that led the magi to start searching for Jesus, why did their assumptions about where a king should be found over-ride their following of a star which ultimately showed them the where to find Jesus? They were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod; how were they changed from people shaped by observation and following to those moved by dreams?

Matthew doesn't say how many wise men there were. Three are often pictured because of the three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They are often thought of as kings because of the influence of Psalm 72:10, Isaiah 49:7 and 60:3. Writings in the 6<sup>th</sup> century give them names and see them as representing ancient cultures coming to the Christ child. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Luther gave the gifts the meaning that we sing about in 'We three Kings', showing that Jesus is king, priest and suffering servant. We see how our interpretations of the Bible are a conversation between past and present about the future.

As we begin a new year and continue our thinking about how God is guiding us for the future of Christ Well, we could learn from the wise men and consider how to use the skills we have to continue the journey; we could avoid jumping to conclusions and thinking we know best about where the journey will take us; and we can wonder where the stars and dreams are that will help us to be guided by God.

Amidst the resolutions and fresh starts, may we make time to discern how God is leading us to discover Jesus again, and in ways that will help us to be his followers today and tomorrow.

**Simon**

**Christmas Gifts**

Some of us shared the Christmas gifts we had received at the service on Christmas Day. I mentioned that my sister had 'twinned' the toilets in the manse with a toilet in Mozambique. It is a way of highlighting that 1 in 4 people in the world don't have healthy sanitation. It provides a donation to help provide toilets, sanitation and training and certificate to raise the profile of the work.

More information is available at <https://toilettwinning.org/>. Simon



**Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Simon Walkling.**

**We will celebrate Communion and the Induction of Elders.**

**Bible Readings: Matthew 2.1-12: Isaiah 60.1-6**

**Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Christ Well**

### **Christmas Donations**

**Church Christmas Card** for the Multiple Sclerosis Society amounted to **£189**.

**Christmas Day Christian Aid appeal** amounted to **£863** to which Gift Aid will be added.

**New Year** (Ecclesiastes 3.1-13: Psalm 8: Revelation 21.1-6a: Matthew 25.31-46)

God of Grace,

at the start of a new year, we offer you our thanks

for the gift of the year just ended

for the possibility of new beginnings

for time to reflect and to look ahead.

We offer you our hopes

for peace for the nations

for forgiveness and reconciliation

for understanding within our communities

for health and wellbeing.

We offer you our dreams and desires

and the deepest thoughts of our hearts.

God of grace, You make all things new.

We commit this year to you.

Guide us, bless us and work within us, so that we may honour you in all we do.

*Sue McCoan* (URC Prayer Handbook 2024)

