

The Season of Manifestation – *Joyce Hill*

As always, on 6 January we begin the season of Epiphany. The name of the season comes ultimately from Greek and means ‘manifestation’. It is this theme of ‘manifestation’, of ‘revealing’ the divine nature of Jesus that is the primary focus of the gospel readings that we hear in church on the Feast of the Epiphany itself and the Sundays of the Epiphany season. In addition, several of the readings refer in some way to the ‘manifestation’ of God to those beyond the Jewish world into which Jesus was born. Indeed, the lectionary in the Book of Common Prayer even provides a heading for the season which reads: ‘The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles’.

The reading for the Feast-day itself is, of course, the story of the Magi. There is no doubt that this is a manifestation and a recognition on more levels than one: the place to which they travel is manifested by a star; they fall down and worship the Christ-child; and their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh symbolically make manifest the kingship, priesthood and future sacrificial death of the baby they have come so far to see. In addition, of course, they are clearly gentiles, travelling from way beyond Judaea, and of an altogether different religion, probably to be imagined as coming from the great Persian Empire across the desert (a rival to the imperial Roman power then occupying Judaea), and most likely members of the Zoroastrian faith.

The BCP’s next two Sunday lections don’t actually concern themselves with gentiles (despite the over-all sub-title that the BCP provides for the season!). Rather, they demonstrate, or manifest, Jesus’ divine wisdom in his debate at the age of twelve with the

elders in the Temple, and his divine power in changing the water into wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana — the first miracle, and one full of prophetic eucharistic symbolism, as biblical commentators invariably pointed out.

For the third Sunday after Epiphany the gentile theme comes to the fore again in the story of how Jesus heals the servant of a Roman centurion, whose faith Jesus recognises in the words: ‘I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel’. And again, manifestation to the gentiles is present in the lection for the fourth Sunday: the story of how, in the country of the Gergesenes or Gadarenes (a non-Jewish community) demons miraculously expelled by Jesus from the possessed inhabit swine, who then rush headlong into the sea. Not that the locals took kindly to this; they asked Jesus to leave.

The BCP’s readings followed pre-Reformation practice. From a thematic point of view it’s not difficult to see why, centuries earlier, these had become the established readings for the season, nor why the BCP continued with them. Nowadays the lectionary of Common Worship has three cycles of readings, for each of three years, and so the picture is more complicated. But these ‘manifestation’ stories are still there, along with others that pick up the theme just as effectively: for example, the baptism of Jesus; the spreading of Jesus’ fame when he had performed a miracle in the synagogue; his prophetic words in another synagogue that ‘no prophet is accepted in his own country’; and the account of the Presentation in the Temple (also read at Candlemas) when Simeon recognises that the baby is ‘a light to lighten the gentiles’. Look out for these themes as you hear the readings in the Season of Manifestation.



Sunday, 6th January 2019



A warm welcome to St Cuthbert's today

We are pleased to offer a loop system for those with hearing difficulties - just turn your hearing aid to the T setting.

8:30am Holy Communion [BCP]

President: The Revd Nick Wells

Preacher: Mr David Matthews

Readings: Isaiah 60. 1-6; Matthew 2. 1-12.

10:00am Holy Communion

President: The Revd Nick Wells

Preacher: Mr David Matthews

Psalm 72 vv 10-15

Readings: as above.

Keep up to date with [us on Facebook at St Cuthbert, Lytham](#) and by regularly visiting our website stcuthbertslytham.org

What do you think about the new Pew Sheet layout? Any feedback or items to appear in the Pew Sheet would be greatly appreciated. Contact the Parish Office, parishoffice@stcuthbertslytham.org.

Mid-week cell groups be starting shortly. We are offering a choice with a Bible Study on the Epistle to the Roman's being led by Nick and a repeat of the Introduction to the Bible led by David Chapman. These groups will both meet on a Tuesday evening in the church and in the vestry. Anyone is very welcome to come along to either group and will be made most welcome.

Church Hall - we are in the process of taking advice regarding damage to the plaster work in the Church Hall overseen by the church architect. We are hoping it is not too significant, but time will tell.

Congratulations - to the Rev'd Helen Houston, who has been appointed to the Chaplaincy Team for the Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. She will take up the post in the spring. Helen will continue to be an assistant priest here at St Cuthbert's.

Cuthbert is a charity registered in England and Wales
Charity Registration No. 1143673
Registered Office: St Cuthbert's Church, Church
Road, Lytham St. Annes, FY8 5QL
Telephone: 01253 736488

Prayer Support - the number of names we include on the prayer support list seems to ever grow. The vicar has therefore decided that names will be included for a period of 6 months. To assist us with this we would really appreciate it if people could re submit names to this list by the end of January. We will be very happy to extend the prayer request at the end of each 6 months.

Of course, there may also be people you are aware of who would value our prayers at a time of special need as well as our ongoing prayer support, in either case please be encouraged to make a request for them.

Mothers' Union - We meet on Thursday 10th January at 2.30 pm when our speaker will be Mr. Barry Band who will tell us of 'The Lion & Albert'. All welcome.

Sponsorship of the Parish Communion service sheet and flowers in church - These sponsorships continue to be available and are always most welcome. It may, for example, be considered appropriate to do this in memory of a loved one or at the time of a special event within the family. Name/s and suitable wording chosen by the donor will feature on the service sheet. The cost of each sponsorship is £25.00; for the sponsorship of both together, the figure is £40.00. Arrangements should be made via the Parish Office at least two weeks before the required date. For those who are taxpayers, there is a reminder that gift-aiding the money will provide even greater financial benefit to the Church. In order to do this, please complete the details on the front of the envelope.

Your prayers are asked for:
those in special need at present: Sally Ward.
the recently departed: John Walker.
in memory of: Elspeth Towler.
and for those who have requested our ongoing prayer support: Adrian Fisher, Barbara Lewin, Catherine Stacey, Patricia Morris, Angela Morgan, Denis Quinlan, David and Margaret Pearson, Beth Mellors, Mary Moulden, Andrew Taylor, Carine Rawnsley, Katie Ritchie, Elizabeth Frater, Raymond Morris, Jo Gibbons, Margaret Wiggans, Peter and Mary Willis, David Fairbrother.

| <i>What's on This Coming Week</i> | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------------|--------|
| Mon | 19.00 | Choir Practice | Vestry |
| Tues | 19.00 | Cell Group | Church |
| Wed | 9.45 | Bertie Bears | Hall |
| | 19.00 | Bell Ringers | Belfry |
| Thurs | 10.30 | Stepping Stones | Hall |
| | 14.30 | Mothers' Union | Hall |
| | 19.00 | PCC Meeting | Vestry |
| Fri | 11.00 | Holy Communion | Church |
| Sat | 10:00 | Open Church | Church |
| Sun | 08:30 | Holy Communion | Church |
| | 10:00 | Holy Communion | Church |

