

January 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Like many I have enjoyed the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany season. There is something so special about the Biblical imagery, the music, the lessons and carols that often speak more powerfully than a sermon ever could...

Eric Clayton – a Catholic relief worker writes...

Throughout Advent, we were waiting for God. Advent is a poignant season because we wait for God to show up in our lives in so many ways, through new and life-altering events. So in Christmas God arrives in our lives in a big way. All of creation exhales that deep sigh of relief because Christ is born; Jesus, whom we've awaited, has arrived. **And while the Christmas season lasts a handful of days into January, the next season is one we call "ordinary," and we're left with the perpetual question: Now what?**

Enter the three magi, a new year, and a moment of epiphany. We make resolutions as a way to usher in the New Year: changes we pledge to make to improve our lives and those of others. I wonder, though, if the story of the magi doesn't offer us something a little deeper.

And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. (Matthew 2:9)

I wonder what those stars are in each of our lives. More to the point, I wonder **where** those stars have come and stopped over, where is God guiding us, in this coming year, to where Christ waits for us?

"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." (Matthew 2:2)

I know that engaging with the new is always hard because it brings unknowns and uncertainties. So across our circuit Churches in the coming year, as we seek to stop and make the time to see the signs of the star of God guiding us, as we try to do some things differently - I have no doubt that there will be difficult moments, when doubt or fear of the new are almost overwhelming.

And yes - in those early moments of change we are tempted to retreat back to what we know, back to what is comfortable. But sometimes we have to stick

with it, give things time, **trust God and allow things to develop even if they are uncomfortable at first.**

At its heart Epiphany and the New Year are important because they stand as a beacon to the idea that

people/we/you/me **CAN**

CHANGE. By God's grace, through Christ's example and with the Holy Spirit prompting us, we can have epiphany moments where we are humble enough to learn and to grow, becoming different from what we were in the past.

We are God's people of Epiphany – as Methodists we believe that 'all can be saved,' that all can have that most wonderful epiphany of coming to faith in Christ.

Eric continues..

And so, I follow the star — a journey that never ends, a journey that grounds me and reminds me of who I was, who I am, and who I am called to be. The waiting ends. We find Christ every day. If we set our sights on the right star, it always comes and stops where God desires us to be.

I pray that in this new-year as people and Churches we may be bold enough to see, experience and accept the epiphanies God offers us.

May God bless you richly this year.

Alan Combes

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News

At Ponders End – we give thanks for the wonderful ongoing refurbishment of the church interior.

At Ordnance Road – we give thanks for the recent Baptism of Gina and a Church full of many guests and young people.

At Goffs Oak – we give thanks for the new tradition of Carols by Torchlight where over 60 villagers came out to sing and enjoy the brass band.

Isaiah 12:2 Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the Lord God is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

