



BENEFICE BULLETIN

Church News for

Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass

5th January 2025

Second Sunday of Christmas

Service Times and Venues

Daily Morning and Evening Prayer conference calls at 8:30am and 4:30pm

Thursdays 10:30am BCP communion at St Gregory's

	<i>Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale</i>	<i>Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill</i>	<i>16:00/18.30—Evensong conference call</i>
5th Jan	8am St Gregory's #	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	St Gregory's, Bedale
	9.15am St Gregory's #F	11am St John's, Leeming #	
12th Jan	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	Burrill Church
19th Jan	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	St Mary's Thornton Watlass
		11am St John's, Leeming #	

Communion F Facebook

Conference Call Tel 03330110945 and enter when prompted Room No.66307496# PIN 9498

PRAYERS AND READINGS

OUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR

Bel Newman, Mark Newman, Lesley Hall, Delma Bode, John Hall, David, Chris, Donna Bradley, George, Olive Robinson, Justin, Amanda, Tracey, Sue, Alison, Tim, Dan, Jeff Betts, John Pickard, George Carling, John, and Doris Pearson.

RIP

*Baby Oscar, Robert Smith, Patricia Stubley, Maureen Graham, and Malcolm Peacock.
May they rest in peace and rise in glory*

Collect

Almighty God, in the birth of your Son you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word, and shown us the fullness of your love: help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love that we may know the fullness of his joy; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading - Jeremiah 31.7-14

For thus says the Lord: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief

of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel.' See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labour, together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.' For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the Lord.

Second Reading - Ephesians 1.3–14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Gospel Reading - John 1.1–18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him;

yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me." ') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Post Communion Prayer

All praise to you, almighty God and heavenly king, who sent your Son into the world to take our nature upon him and to be born of a pure virgin: grant that, as we are born again in him, so he may continually dwell in us and reign on earth as he reigns in heaven, now and for ever. Amen.

COMMENTARY ON THE READINGS

It is because we know almost nothing about the wise men, our imaginations take wing. If we were brought up in the Christian faith, these characters have ridden across our minds and hearts ever since we first heard the story. Even the most sophisticated children secretly envy those who have been selected to play the wise men. Parents will ransack attics for pieces of fabric—the more brilliant and exotic the better—and someone in the family will create a costume that will be linked to no particular age, time, or culture, but will somehow speak of far-off places, distant shores, desert sands and starry skies—all at the same time.

They have always fascinated us, these travellers who must have loomed in the entrance to the cave before an astonished—and probably alarmed—Mary and Joseph. All the language we use about them tends to reach for a larger-than-life quality. One of the church's hymns claims that to rival their gifts we would have to bring to this "brightest and best of the sons of the morning, odours of Edom, gems of the mountain, pearls of the ocean." When Isaiah speaks of such visitors, he speaks in the most extravagant terms. "Kings!" Isaiah proclaims. "Kings come to the brightness of your dawn." And because the traditional three camels do not seem enough to do justice to the celebration, we turn to Isaiah's evocation of "a multitude of camels . . . the young camels of Midian and Ephah." Then, "all those from Sheba" are invited too.

But even Isaiah fails to satisfy our wish to paint a vast and wonderful canvas for these visitors to the stable. We go to the psalmist for more vivid images, and he obliges by bringing on stage "the kings of Tarshish and of the isles . . . the kings of Sheba and Seba," saying of them that they "all fall down" before this child.

This child. In those two words we give the reason for our longing for the most expansive language and images we can create, for we know this child's glory calls forth every possible beauty of

utterance, image, art and song. We know that no stage is too vast for this child, no visitor too royal to kneel, and no gift too precious to offer.

Moments later we listen to Paul. How excited he is by what he has to impart—this mystery, this revelation, this gospel! Notice how he too is reaching for the most expansive language he can conjure up to express his thought. And no wonder. For instead of a small land and a marginal people being the recipients of this news, the entire world has become a wide field for God's seeding. To use Paul's term, the horizon has been pushed back to include the gentiles—the world!

As we finish listening to Paul's excited sharing of this vast new possibility for the gospel, we hear Matthew telling us how the Magi completed their journey—dismounting, entering into the shadows of the cave, kneeling and offering their gifts. And as we listen, we realise that we have seen the coming of the very first gentiles, kneeling and worshipping before this God in human flesh, a God not yet even weaned by his mother.

The Magi fascinate us also because they do not fit into this tiny stage of hill village and humble stable. Their sophistication clashes with this simplicity, their obvious power sits uneasily beside the vulnerability of child and family. They are urban in a rural world, affluent in the midst of poverty, cosmopolitan amid the provincial.

We discern their wisdom even as we read of their dealings with the court of Herod. Civilized and mannered, they pay their respects to Herod, yet with contemptuous ease they see the reality behind the pathetic physical and mental wreck Herod has become. They have gained experience at a far more powerful court and have no illusions about Herod's ability to be dangerous and vicious, even in his decline.

Theirs is a deep wisdom. The Magi represent forever and for all of us the wisdom that recognizes human life to be a journey taken in search of One who calls us beyond ourselves into faithful service—One before whom we are prepared to kneel, and to whom we offer the best of our gifts, flawed and unworthy though they be. We watch these visitors to Bethlehem, as they kneel with supreme grace and dignity before what is to them simplicity, vulnerability and poverty. They are prepared to kneel, for in their wisdom—and this is the heart of what makes them truly wise—they discern the glory that is hidden in this place and in this child.

And so, we too, daily engaged in our own all too human journey, searching for that which would have us be so much more than we are, and bearing our unworthy gifts, kneel on the stable floor beside these royal ones, worshipping with them the child who is most royal.