



# The Lion

A Monthly News Sheet for St. Mark's Church, Basford

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CHRISTMAS 2018 and NEW YEAR 2019



## Reflections from Jerusalem

Christmas has a habit of becoming a very parochial matter for many of us. When we imagine Christmas we quixotically attach our ideals to it. Snow falling, Victorian carol singers knocking on the door and bright Christmas tree's adorning every house.

Yet these customs and forms of Christmas are specific to us because of our cultural circumstances, for other Christians across the world, Christmas looks very different.

A number of us had the great fortune of visiting the Holy Land in October and this experience enabled many of us to remove ourselves from the culture that we take as normative to see Christianity in the land of its origin where traditions are indeed somewhat different.

My first impression of this strange land was arriving at Tel Aviv airport where the modern day concerns of the state of Israel made themselves known. I was quizzed at passport check-in by an Israeli officer who enquired into the reasons of my visit. I explained that I was an Anglican priest here on pilgrimage. The officer stiffened asking what sites I intended to visit and if I had any accomplices. They were quite right to do so as the last thing they want on their hands is Anglican extremists entering this already tense territory. Imagine the chaos when I would ask the Orthodox Patriarch Theophilus III whether he had a faculty for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre armed with my radical henchwoman Jean Bailey.

We took a short taxi from the airport and arrived at the Holy City rather late in the evening. Jerusalem was an incredibly earthly place. There were the groups of teenagers, late night corner shops and narrow streets that one doesn't necessarily associate with the city of God that we read in our bibles. The weight of history and sense of continuous habitation was immediately apparent. From 3000 BC Jerusalem had been inhabited; first by the Caananites before Joshua led the people of Israel into the land. From the Canaanites to today Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, besieged **23** times, attacked **52** times,

and captured and recaptured **44** times. Every civilisation of note have left their mark on the city from the Jews, Persians, Greek's, Romans, Byzantines, Umayyad, Crusaders, Ottomans and British to name but a few.

With such fecundity of attacks and invasions the name Jerusalem meaning 'City of Peace' can feel like a bitter irony but as Fr. Terry noted, the city has an ability to provide you with 'a moment'. This is after all why we had visited as had countless other pilgrims over the millennia. To be at the very sites where our Lord principally underwent his passion and resurrection at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to where Jesus wept for the city of Jerusalem at the Church of Dominus Felvit on the Mount of Olives to the Crusader Church of St. Anne's built upon the childhood home of the Virgin Mary.

It was at the last two places of worship that my two moments came. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, though mind blowing was at all times incredibly busy. The other two churches had a quieter feel. We shared a

Eucharist together at Dominus Flevit with a stupefying view of the city of Jerusalem in the background. This was the first special moment, the second was equally transcendent in quality. The Church of St. Anne is situated next to the pools of Bethesda (see John 5). The Church is famed for its acoustics that make it a pilgrimage site for many cantors who wish to sing their devotions. Our own Fr. Terry sang *Salve Regina* to acclaim. Yet sat on the front row was a woman who as I was about to leave the Church started to sing 'Make me a channel of your peace'. I rarely find myself rendered motionless but there and then I

was. I was fixed, the subject in this recitation of harmony and beauty. The singing figure stood perfectly still as the hymn came to an end only to lead effortlessly into 'Ave Maria'—there the amorous offerings only soared to greater heights and my use of words are not sufficient to convey the delicacy and exquisiteness of what was heard.

The singing figure will always remain nameless to me, she will always remain faceless to me but as an Angel



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used to stir the waters of Bethsaida perhaps an Angel was heard that day.

The city of Jerusalem is too big a subject to cover here but finally I turn my attention to an excursion outside of Israel to Bethlehem. The polarity of the contemporary situation was apparent with Jews occupying one bank and Palestinians another. We arrived and our Palestinian Christian tour guide took us first to the site where the Shepherds first heard the call of the Angels song. We discovered that shepherds in that time used to take refuge in a structure of caves under the ground, we visited one of these caves and in the blazing sunshine it was a welcomed temporary reprieve.

The insights of the shepherds was an informative one as it reminded one of the utterly human and humble origins in which the greatest story ever told emerged. We ascended the hill on which the Church of the nativity rests. There the modest Church rests, proudly capping a grotto that lies mystically beneath. This site had been recognised from the beginning as the place in which the nativity occurred. The Church was crowded with many people all making their way to the back of a long queue that eventually fed into a small door that rested at the bottom of some stairs which itself led to the grotto. There was a tangible sense of expectation alive in the Church. A sense of wonder as to what lay within the grotto inspired many to confront the long line that lay outside it. We were lucky in our tour guide as he managed to fast track us through. The expectation and longing was great and when we went in there it was, a small unadorned star on the floor that marks the spot where our Lord was born.

In many ways this is the heart of our Gospel hope; it transcends our expectations in its utter simplicity. So whilst our Christmas time is understandably pervaded with our own cultural flourishes, let us not forget that ineffable mystery and grace that presents itself to us not in the trappings and trimmings of Christmas time but in the ordinary and lowly reality of a baby born in a manger who would redeem a people for God- a work I can only conclude able to be performed by God Himself.

A very blessed Christmas to you all.

*Patrick*



**Pat and Terry**  
**also take this opportunity to wish you all**  
**a blessed and peaceful Christmas!**



### Worship Services during January

2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>Basil the Great</i>	8.00am 10.30am	Morning Prayer Holy Communion (BCP)
6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Epiphany</b>	8.00am 9.30am	<b>Holy Communion (BCP)</b> <b>First Sunday (with HC)</b>
9 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Wednesday</i>	8.00am 10.30am	Morning Prayer Holy Communion (BCP)
13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Baptism of our Lord</b>	8.00am 9.30am	<b>Holy Communion (BCP)</b> <b>Holy Communion</b>
16 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Wednesday</i>	8.00am 10.30am	Morning Prayer Holy Communion (BCP)
20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> of Epiphany</b>	8.00am 9.30am	<b>Holy Communion (BCP)</b> <b>Holy Communion</b>
23 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>Wednesday</i>	8.00am 10.30am	Morning Prayer Holy Communion (BCP)
27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> of Epiphany</b>	8.00am 9.30am	<b>Holy Communion (BCP)</b> <b>Holy Communion</b>
30 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Wednesday</i>	8.00am 10.30am	Morning Prayer Holy Communion (BCP)

### Diary Dates for January

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Wednesday	7.30pm	Reading Circle (Lady Chapel)
8 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	7.00pm	PCC Meeting
9 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	7.30pm	2019 Wedding Preparation
11 <sup>th</sup>	Friday	2.00pm	Funeral: Sheila Puddu - RIP
16 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	7.00pm	Deanery Synod (Trentham)
17 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	7.30pm	Contemplative Prayer
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Wednesday	7.30pm	Baptism Preparation

### Early February

4 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	7.30pm	Men's Mass at Tunstall
6 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	7.30pm	Reading Circle
7 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	7.30pm	Deanery Committee (vestry)

### “Winter Time” by Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,  
 A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;  
 Blinks but an hour or two; and then,  
 A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,  
 At morning in the dark I rise;  
 And shivering in my nakedness,  
 By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit  
 To warm my frozen bones a bit;  
 Or with a reindeer-sled, explore  
 The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap  
 Me in my comforter and cap;  
 The cold wind burns my face, and blows  
 Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;  
 Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;  
 And tree and house, and hill and lake,  
 Are frosted like a wedding-cake.