

***Letter from the stewards....******10<sup>th</sup> January 2022***

Hello friends,

At last the letter for the week. Hope you are enjoying the sunny (although cold) days after all the grey and wet. We can actually now see that that daylight is increasing which is very encouraging.

On Sunday we welcomed our Minister Rev Phil to our pulpit for a Covenant Service. Phil had fallen off his bike the previous week and was suffering from a fractured bone in his wrist and sore knee but stoically walked to Swanmore, arm in sling. We did give him a lift home.

Hymns were all from CMP:

39: As with gladness, 272: I have decided to follow Jesus, 740: We three kings and 501: O Jesus I have promised.

The reading was Mathew 2: 1 - 18 and was read by John Moorhouse.

Phil's sermon was very powerful and gave us a different slant on the visit of the Epiphany.. Phil questioned why it was only Matthew who recorded the visit of the Three! Kings to Jesus, via the evil Herod. He said it was because it did indeed happen. Why did Herod himself, not visit the new King or send a messenger when only a few miles away? He waited before deciding to destroy all the baby boys.

Most preachers leave the story at verse 12 before 'The escape to Egypt' but Phil took on the escape as well. God appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take the baby and get back to Egypt, which he did. Phil had also roughly worked out the number of baby boys affected and although horrendous, was probably not a very huge number. But how do we know that God didn't speak to other families in dreams who may have ignored his warning? Lots to think about.

In the Covenant Service, we make promises which are a whole of life agreement. Christianity is a whole package and we can't pick and choose which bits we want. The Covenant Service and our commitment encapsulates the story of the Epiphany and God's vision.

Thank you, Phil, for this valuable message and we all hope that you will soon be healed.

Our friend Pastor Peter Castle will be with us on Sunday. 23rd will be Nicky Gilbert and 30th Grace Westerduin.

We look forward to seeing you at these services but understand if you are unable to attend and hope that you all stay safe and well.

God bless.

Carol, Jill and Kathy