

### Thank you from Annette:

Thank you to everyone who has helped me to make You Tube video services most Sundays since March 2020. We've had a lot of fun and look forward to some more in 2021. Thanks for watching them if you do. Spread the word. Special thanks to my son Michael; and to Jimmy Bear and Anita his dresser!

Thank you to everyone who enabled worship to take place in 2020, even if it was stop / start. We are resting for a couple of weeks now as we are aware of the rising cases of Covid in our area and want to make sure we don't offer any setting where it could spread.

We will still hold funerals if required.

Thank you to everyone who prays for the ministry of our four churches, who has kept an eye on those who may be particularly struggling these lockdown days and has remarkably supported us financially. Despite our reduced services and other activities, we still have to maintain our buildings, and pay our insurances and parish share to keep a full-time vicar busying away! As a benefice, we managed to contribute our full share this year. The Diocese of Ely are very grateful.

Thank you to everyone who is, in any way, part of our ongoing shared story. Your good wishes and love are so important.

Your Facebook comments are valued and your waves and smiles when we meet outdoors can make a dull day very special.

Please take the greatest care these next few weeks.

### A prayer for the New Year.

Loving God,

The new year, like a new-born child, is placed into our hands  
as the old year passes away.

The days and weeks to come are God's gift.

They are God's blessing.

As a blessing, we welcome them.

Our hope as the past year has ended is that all that was good in it  
remains with us, and all that was harmful be left behind.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.



### The Benefice of the Paxtons with Diddington and Southoe

January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021

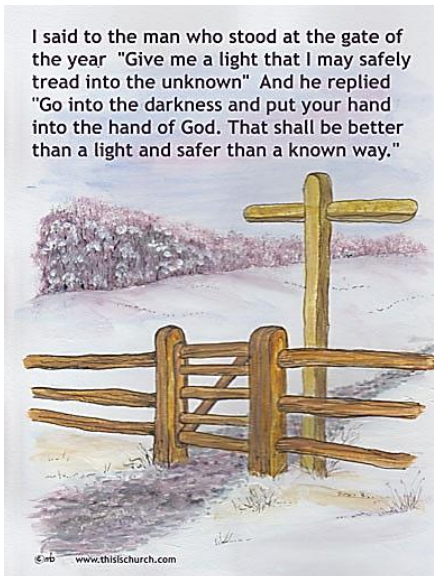
“Keeping in Touch” Edition 41

Annette writes:

Greetings to you all as we commence a new year.

If there is one universal wish which most of us have, it is the hope that this new year will be happier than 2020. There are a variety of adjectives that could be used to describe last year, and although amazing love and support has been shown by so many to those badly effected by Covid-19, for a lot of people it has brought physical, emotional, mental and financial suffering. We know there are still tough weeks ahead before the various vaccines take effect and the infection rate drops but hopes are strong that 2021 will see Covid receding and that the many social and family aspects of life we miss so much will return safely.

Below is part of a poem written in 1908 by Minnie Haskins and it is set beside a snowy image of a walk across uncharted fields. As we journey into the unknown this new year, who may be our guide, comforter and constant companion? There is an open invitation to journey with our ever-present God who came to earth as a baby to remind us that He is always with us, in the good days and when we feel lost and afraid. There are more thoughts about the poem on page 3.



Do keep well, keep safe and keep cheerful. Annette.  
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## The Gospel for the Second Sunday after Christmas

### Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### A Collect for The Feast of the Epiphany

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



***“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”***

So runs a line in the young American lady Minnie Haskin's poem *The Man at the Gate*, written in 1908 when she was living in Bristol.

The Queen mother found her poem very moving, as did her husband King George VI. So much so that he used the words in his speech when he addressed the nation on the radio at Christmas 1939. WW2 in Europe had begun in September of that year, and the UK along with many other countries was at the start of what was going to be a long and protracted war with millions enduring suffering and poverty. That was 81 years ago.

The UK and most countries across the world are now facing our own protracted battle with a virus which in its own way is causing suffering and financial hardship to families and individuals.

As we stand at the beginning of another year, the universal wish and hope is that 2021 will be considerably better than 2020 and with the availability of various vaccines, this modern-day battle will be won before too long. But we know that there are uncertainties, and we can't predict what the new normal will look like as yet. But we must journey with hope, like our forebears did 81 years ago when they heard King George read out Minnie's poem.

The travellers from the east, who found the infant Christ, also travelled in the dark – not knowing where their journey might end or how long it might take. All they had was a star to follow – that was their known way.

But it led them to where the Christ child was staying, safe with his parents, out of the way of King Herod. And they returned home by another route to avoid that threatening king, their lives we presume changed for ever by their encounter with the light of the Christ child.

January is named after the Roman God Janus, who was always depicted having two heads. He looked back to the last year and forward to the new one.

So as the old year passes, and we face 2021, may we take what was good from 2020 – and I hope there were some good days for you. And may we face the future, despite its uncertainties, with confidence that the light and love of God's presence is always with us even when we cannot make sense of what is going on around us.

***“So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me toward the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.”***

May the breaking of the day be soon with us all and our brothers and sisters across the world.