

**Second Sunday of Epiphany,
Sunday, 16th January 2022**



Dear Friends,

***‘Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory;
and his disciples believed in him.’***

(John 2: 11)

This week’s newsletter brings you an update from the Diocese of Winchester, which is reprinted here, at the end of my letter. Two dates are of note:

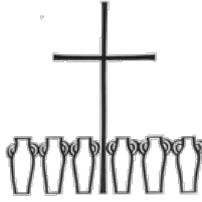
- A service of Evensong will be held on **Saturday, 29th January at 5.30pm** in Winchester Cathedral to mark Tim Dakin’s departure from episcopal office – all are welcome to attend.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury will be coming to Winchester Cathedral for the service on **Sunday, 16th January at 11am** to pray with us and to commission the team charged with finding the new Bishop of Winchester.

In the midst of all this serious change and upheaval for our diocese, some humour feels in order. I heard the following on Radio 4’s ‘*Sorry I haven’t a Clue*’ comedy quiz programme on Saturday. My thanks to those of you who have sent it to me throughout the week.

Show host, Jack Dee, asked panellists to complete the missing words from rhymes taken from greetings cards. John Finnemore fills in the blanks at the end of this card:

‘We’ve missed you from Church’ card:

We want to let you know we haven't seen you for a while,
We've noticed that you've not been here, we miss your friendly smile.
We think of you so very much, you're in our Sunday prayer
But you're the actual Vicar, so you really should be there!



It would have been my dear Mother's 83rd birthday this weekend. Fondly known by her children as Mutti (German for 'Mummy'), it is also a decade since she died in 2012 - three months after my wonderful father, so I have been thinking of them both a good deal.

Earlier in the week, as I sat planning what to write to you all, one of Mutti's well-used mantras came to mind: *'Never put off until tomorrow what can be done today.'* Mutti, as kind and loving as she was, couldn't bear procrastination. Since as a child I was rather good at putting off doing things like homework, I remember hearing that phrase quite a lot over the years! It's probably how I spotted the fearful art of procrastination at work in this week's Gospel reading of the Wedding Feast at Cana.



'Marriage at Cana' by Giotto di Bondone

In John's earthy narrative, Mary finds Jesus amidst the throng of merry-makers and tells Him the wine has run out. The family of the newly-weds are about to face social disgrace before their invited guests. ... what to do? In appraising Him of the situation, Mary waits patiently for Jesus to do something, yet He looks straight back at her and says *'What's this got to do with me?'*

And this the moment where I caught the glimmer of my own Mutti in Mary's eyes. Mary gives Jesus *'that look'* which mothers are prone to give their children when they haven't quite followed instructions. Seemingly ignoring Jesus, Mary looks straight past him to the servants and says to them *'Do whatever He tells you.'* Jesus must have recognised *'that look'* in Mary's eyes as she spoke. *That steely look* which has the power to turn a child's knees to jelly in that Epiphany moment of realisation - there's no way back, nowhere to hide, and no way of putting things off to another day: Jesus' moment had come!

Now, Mary might not have been *expecting* Jesus to perform a miracle, but she certainly trusted Him to do the right thing. In fact, she had absolute faith that He would!

Notice Mary didn't tell Jesus what to. Instead, she recognised that Jesus was more than her earthly son – He was the Son of God. With her determined, faithful heart, she simply brought her problem to Jesus, straightaway - no procrastinating, and let Him sort the situation out the way He saw fit.



'Wedding at Cana' by Pablo Veronese

I wonder if we always do that. Do we bring our problems and worries straightaway to Jesus? I am sure there are times in our lives when we go all around the houses, looking everywhere, *anywhere* for help but from Jesus; times when we try to make sense of our lives by searching for comfort and meaning in dark and lifeless places. And when we *finally* ask Jesus for help, do we like Mary submit to Jesus' absolute Lordship or do we have an expectation about the outcome – about how *we want Him* to help us rather than trusting Him to deal with our difficulties the way He sees best.

I am grateful to my beloved Mutti for her wise and loving encouragement, just as we can see Jesus was encouraged by the patient, wise and faithful wisdom of his own treasured mother in the unfolding family drama at Cana. I am equally grateful to Jesus for answering my anguished prayers for my parents the way He saw best: blessing us all with the gift of peace in His calling them home when He did. Hard as it was, I am so glad we placed our absolute trust in Him to do the right thing.

This Second Sunday of Epiphany, in the middle of such a familiar Gospel story of precious water changing into even more precious wine, Mary encourages us not to procrastinate where Jesus is concerned. By her own example, she is saying '*Believe in Christ!*' because He is the God who continues His Creation even in those of us who are poor, weak, orphaned, sick and in heartfelt need. Mary is showing us an Epiphany moment, in that when we take the risk to trust our lives to Jesus, the God of Creation who turned water into wine will also transform us beyond our wildest imagination.

So, why put off until tomorrow what can be done today? Why wait until everything else runs out before turning to God? Why save the best until last?

Yours, trusting in Christ

Jax
Rector, The Downs Benefice

Collect Prayer for The Second Sunday of Epiphany

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



John 2: 1-11 - The Wedding at Cana

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.'

His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.'

So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.



Dear Friends,

Once again, the joy of Christmas was tempered for many by the backdrop of the pandemic, with sharply rising hospital admissions, coupled with speculation over what a new year would hold. Then, this week, has come one particularly sobering figure amidst the usual myriad of daily data: more than 150,000 people have now lost their lives to the virus across the UK. Our prayers are with all those who have lost their lives over the past two years, for those who are grieving loved-ones, and for the NHS staff and key workers to whom we owe so much.

We hope that you all, eventually, had the opportunity for some well-earned rest, after your tireless ministry over Advent and Christmas. As we look ahead to 2022, we are pleased that the Archbishop of Canterbury has set out arrangements for the Diocese of Winchester, ahead of Bishop Tim formally stepping-down next month. As is customary, Bishop Tim will be laying down his pastoral staff to mark his retirement at Evensong on Saturday 29th January at 5.30pm. You will see the Archbishop expects that the process for appointing a successor is then expected to begin towards the end of the year.

In his letter to the Diocese, Archbishop Justin confirms that Bishop Debbie will continue in the role of Acting Bishop of Winchester during the vacancy, working closely with Bishop David and the Bishop's Staff Team. Bishop Richard Frith, who as you know has been working with us in recent months, will formally take up the role of Archbishop's Episcopal Commissary in the Diocese. We appreciate all that he has been doing, and will continue to do, to help our diocese in this process of healing and reconciliation, and as we look ahead to the future.

The Archbishop will be coming to Winchester Cathedral for the 11am service on Sunday 16th January to pray with us and to commission the episcopal team. We are enormously grateful for the support he has provided. In turn, we would like to thank you for the prayers and support you have given to us.

With prayers,

Bishop Debbie and Bishop David

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, unless marked differently on the table below.

Owing to the new Government Coronavirus restrictions, masks must once again be worn in church services and services must be booked by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>16th Jan</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer			
<i>23rd Jan</i>			Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	8am – Holy Communion
<i>26th Jan</i>			Mid-Week Holy Communion		
<i>30th Jan</i>		Benefice Holy Communion			
<i>6th Feb</i>	Morning Prayer to mark 70 th Anniversary of HM The Queen's accession to the throne	Holy Communion	4pm - Café Church		
<i>13th Feb</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>20th Feb</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		8am – Holy Communion	
<i>27th Feb</i>			Morning Prayer	Morning Worship	8am – Holy Communion
<i>2nd March ASH WEDNESDAY</i>	12 noon - Holy Communion with Ashes		Holy Communion with Ashes		<i>With Chilbolton</i>