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Weekly Letter – 4th January 2026

Matthew 2:1-12

A new year has begun, but we are still the same people with the same concerns, and we are still praying about many of the same problems in the world. We are also still living with the wonder of God come in Jesus at Christmas, and seeking God as we move into remembering the ways God is revealed through the season of Epiphany.

We are familiar with this week's passage because we hear it every year. One of the striking things about the way Matthew tells the good news is how many scripture quotes are included. There was the quote from Isaiah about Jesus being 'Immanuel' – God with us. Now, there is the quote saying that the shepherd ruler would be born in Bethlehem, from Micah. There will be a reference to the voice of lamentation in Ramah from Jeremiah after Herod massacres the baby boys, and from Hosea saying about God calling his son out of Egypt. Then there is a quote which no-one can pin down about Jesus being a Nazorean, which Matthew links to Jesus growing up in Nazareth.

People wonder whether the write of Matthew was a scribe, perhaps drawing on Matthew the tax collector's memories, on Mark's gospel and on a common source which Luke also had but we can only guess at. Later in Matthew, there is a reference to a 'scribe trained for the kingdom' bringing old and new out of his store, which people point to supporting this theory (Matt 13:52).

For us a key point is the continuity of God's involvement with the people he calls to continue his work. As we wonder about what changes to make in our lives in the new year, and how to make a difference in our world, we can know that God is with us, guides us, and inspires us to be part of his unfolding purpose.

Pray that God will guide you in the way you need. Pray that God will guide us as a church to find the way to him and find our way round the vested interests that shape our world.

Simon

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Simon Walkling. We will celebrate Communion.

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Uniting Church, Sketty

Tuesday, 6th January – 2-4 pm – Tea and Chat

NOW THE RUSH IS OVER - SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

(Lectionary Readings: Jeremiah 31.7-14: Psalm 147.12-20: Ephesians 1.3-14: John 1.(1-9), 10-18)

Christmas seems quite a long time ago now Lord; can it be only a week ago?
The carols have stopped on the radio, holiday companies tempt us with summer extravaganzas,
and the dusty decorations need to come down again.
Now the rush is over and we're back to normal.

There's so little time to think about Christmas at Christmas; it's great to see loved ones,
eat good food and listen to lovely music but so little time to think about the meaning of it all.
Maybe you feasted with family and friends on high days and holy days?
Perhaps this is what we should think about; the joys and sorrows, the fun and fellowship,
the loneliness and sadness, the feasts and famines, the glory and the tragedy of being human.

You experienced all of this, Lord. You live amongst us and we see your glory,
showing us grace and truth incarnated in the mess and muddle of life.
Give us grace to see your glory revealed in flesh. **Amen.**

Andy Braunston (URC Prayer Handbook 2026)

