



## Team Parish of Christ the King St Aidan's, Brunton Park

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> December 2021**  
**St Stephen's Day**

Today we celebrate St Stephen's Day. Stephen was the most well-known of the seven Deacons recruited by the 12 Apostles to help with the care of the poor, the widows and orphans. However, he was also a good preacher and it was his preaching which got him into trouble with the enemies of the Church, resulting in them stoning him to death. The church in her wisdom follows the joyful celebration of Christ's birth with the feast day of the first Christian Martyr.

In fact, this week we also have the Murder of the Holy Innocents on Tuesday and St. Thomas Becket who was also murdered on Wednesday.

So, this first week of Christmas has a bittersweet mood to it and perhaps a reminder that being a Christian, following Christ is not an easy option.

As Stephen died, he imitated Jesus on the cross saying:

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

There are many aspects of Stephen's life which parallel Jesus, as he sought to follow Jesus closely.

The Church gives us this reminder that the Christian life is not just the joy of Christmas morning, but the challenge of suffering throughout our daily lives. We rejoice over the salvation freely offered by the baby in the manger, but the reality is. **He calls us to "pick up our cross" and follow Him.**

Central to that calling is the care for the poor and destitute. In times gone by Boxing day was when the poor were given Christmas Boxes. In the time when the landed gentry and rich had many house staff. Boxing Day was their day off and they were often sent home with the left over food from Christmas day. In churches the Christmas collections were distributed on Boxing Day. It's where the notion of alms giving comes from. When we all lived in villages it would have been easier to identify the poor as they were part of the community. Today life is very different, we are much more aware of the poverty and suffering in our world beyond our local community. We recognise the need to help the poor all year not just at Christmas.

As we celebrate God's gift to us this Christmas, let us not forget our calling to give to the poor and needy in our world.

## **First Reading: Acts 7.51-end**

Stephen said to the high priest and the council: 'You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it.'

When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

## **Gospel Reading: Matthew 10.17-22**

Jesus summoned the twelve and sent them out with the following instruction: 'Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.'

## **THE WEEK AHEAD**

**Wed** 10.00am, Church: **BCP Midweek Eucharist**  
**Sun 2<sup>nd</sup>** 8:00, Church: Holy Communion  
9.30am, **Parish Eucharist : Epiphany**  
Rev'd Ben Pullan Presiding and Preaching  
Readings: Isaiah 61.1-6 and Matthew 2.1-12

## **NOTICES**

**SUNDAY SERVICE** – today, we have Rev'd Canon Jean Skinner preaching for us. The live link for those wishing to watch from home is <https://bit.ly/StStephens21>

**MARGARET McMillan** – it is with sadness that we share the news that Margaret died on Monday night. Our prayers to go to her family and friends. Funeral details will follow

**'BEYOND THE COLLAR'** – there are some leaflets at the back of church from Mark Edwards about the upcoming release of his new book, which is being released in early January, people are welcome to take one and buy his book when it comes out!

**GERARD ANNUAL LEAVE** – Gerard will be on holiday from 27<sup>th</sup> Dec-3rd Jan, so please send any non-urgent enquiries to the administrator, urgent enquiries to Rev'd Ben Pullan.

**CHRISTMAS DONATIONS** – monies raised this year from our Christmas services will go to the RNLI and Children North-East.

**HELP CHOOSE OUR NEXT BISHOP** - Consultations are underway, and we have two opportunities to contribute our thoughts. Bill Lomas is a member of the Vacancy in See Committee so please speak to, or email Bill with your thoughts ([avrillomas@aol.com](mailto:avrillomas@aol.com)), so they can be added to the role description. Bill has asked us to consider three questions:

1. What are the particular challenges and opportunities facing the diocese now and in the foreseeable future?
2. What will the diocese need to do to ensure it is fit to face these challenges and to seize these opportunities?
3. What therefore are the qualities, skills and experience we are looking in our new diocesan bishop?

There is a survey for anyone who wishes to complete, which closes at midnight, Fri 14 Jan 2022. <https://www.surveymonkey.de/r/V9FGYVV> After Christmas the Crown Nominations Commission members will consult with us.

**USED STAMPS** – if you have any used stamps, please save them and put them in the box at the back of church. The stamps will go to St Oswald's Hospice to raise funds. Thousands of pounds have been raised over the years from used stamps but due to emails and pre-paid enveloped funds are reducing.

**ZOOM CODES** – all our Zoom sessions will use only the following details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7573778713?pwd=NGVjcTRLQjBEaStqYjFDSm1KOURtQT09>

Meeting ID: 757 377 8713 Passcode: StAidan

**BOOKING ZOOM MEETINGS:** if you would like to use the St Aidan's Zoom account for a church meeting, please contact Janice

**CHURCH OPENING** – church is now open during the day, every day. Please come in at any time for some quiet time or prayer.

**FOOD BANK** – a little reminder that we still collect for the foodbank. There is a box at the back of church for donations.

**CHURCH CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS** – when attending a service, please wear a face mask (in Plan B this is now a legal requirement), sanitise your hands on entering church, and maintain at least a one metre distance.

**DONATIONS** - to make a donation to St Aidan's, please use the following link:

<https://givealittle.co/campaigns/8a599239-a9bd-4136-8b4b-1dcabb0a2c65>

**For Our Prayers...** We give thanks for our church family here at St Aidan's and pray for our Team Parish - for God's upholding in all that lies ahead.

We pray for God's world – in times of upheaval and conflict we pray for peace- for resolutions to tensions between nations and peoples, for all caught up in tragedy, disaster and despair.

In our St Aidan's cycle of prayer we pray for Sacred Heart RC and St John's URC. Within our church we pray for retired clergy: Ben Pullan, Christine Crompton and Ray Devenney.

Within the wider community we pray for Christian Aid, the Children's Society, and other charities supported by the church and the Saturday café.

We remember in our prayers Gladys Johnston, Sheila Lonie, Sylvia Hickey and all others who are unwell at home or in hospital. We pray for those who have died in recent days remembering especially Margaret McMillan.

We remember with thanksgiving and joy our loved ones who are now with Our Father in the heavenly kingdom – Lily Seargeant, Hazel Nicholls, Sheena MacLeod, Alice Vout, Joyce Russell, Minnie Browne, Doris Bartle, Charlotte Holmes

## **CONTACTS**

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