



The Revd Johannes Nobel

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May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

Psalm 29:11

Wednesday, 6 January 2021, The Feast of Epiphany

Dear friends,

Today is the feast of Epiphany. Did you know the wise men came from Yorkshire? They came from the east riding...

I am afraid that is the only joke for today. On a much more serious note, I need to let you know that, during national lockdown, our churches will once again switch to live-streaming and online services.

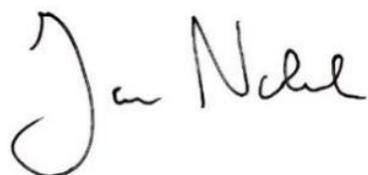
This has been a difficult decision. The government allows public worship to continue, and some churches will be open as 'normal' on Sunday. Many more will not. The wisdom of common sense is to discourage any gatherings. This is how we love our neighbour as ourselves. We choose to stay at home, not because we are forced to, but to keep each other safe and to protect our NHS. God is with us, wherever we are. Please pray for your brothers and sisters, and for the wider world, at this difficult time. I continue to light a candle every night and pray for you.

However, I realise that some of us feel particularly bereft by the closure of our church. I would like to hear from anyone who is unable to access our online worship provisions. If you own a smartphone, tablet or computer but need some more help, we would be most happy to give you technical support. If however you have no means to connect to the internet, we would like to offer you other worship resources to use at home. Please be in touch with me or Julie. Also, you may be pleased to know that **St Thomas church will be open for private prayer for one hour on Sundays between 2pm and 3pm.**

In the meantime, we remain encouraged by the rollout of the vaccine. Of course, our hope is not in medicine, but in our Great Physician. We pray that he will bless the final stages of our battle against the virus.

Hope for the Lord! Let your heart be firm and bold, and hope for the Lord! (Psalm 27.9)

Love and Prayers,



Jan Nobel

Priest in Charge – St Thomas Osbaldwick with St James Murton

Green Ambassador – Diocese of York

Associate Lecturer (BA, MA, MA Dunelm, AFHEA) – York School of Ministry



A Psalm of Lament and Praise

How shall we praise you, Lord, our God?
When we are locked down,
how shall we praise you?

When the doors to your house are barred,
and your people cannot assemble?

When those desperately in need of
money and work
cannot even wait in the market-place?

When we have to
circle round people in the street,
and queue for shops
maintaining safe distance?

When we can only communicate
by hearing on the phone,
or seeing on the screen;
or digitally messaging,
or even just waving through a window?

When we cannot meet our
parents and children,
grandparents and grandchildren,
or other family members and friends?

When we cannot touch them
in their flesh and blood,
to know they are really alive?

How shall we praise you?

How, like Thomas,
shall we not see yet believe
that your son is raised among us?

How shall we praise you?
How can I praise you, Lord?

Are you plaguing us with this virus
to punish us because
we have all done wrong,
or thought wrongly,
or felt wrongly,
or just been wrong?

If so, why do only some die,
and those, apparently, the ones who are
the least worst or most caring
amongst us?

Or are you trying to teach us a lesson?

If so, why is it so hard to learn?

And how are we to find the answer
when we do not even know the question?

Or are you still the same loving God,
coming to us in our sufferings
and opening up the way to
new life in Jesus?

Lord, I will try to praise you.
Through gritted teeth,
I will try to praise you.
I will try to remember that you have
created all things,
and this virus is part of your creation.
I will try not to hate it
but seek to mitigate its harm.
I will try to keep myself and others safe.
I will work to pray for them
and seek to help in whatever way I can.

Lord, when I cannot pray or worship
help me be aware of all your people
and your saints and angels
hovering around me,
lifting me up.

When I feel alone,
let me feel you near me,
even if only for a moment that enables me
to go on.

Let me hear you say
“Peace be with you”.

Lord, I will praise you.
Let all the peoples praise you.

(The Revd Kenneth Howcroft)