

## **A Reflection from a St Mary's Churchwarden (Charles Wilson)**

A very Happy New Year from all of us at St Mary's, and we trust you have joy, hope and courage to face all that lies ahead in 2019. I'd rather be churchwarden in an Interregnum than Prime Minister of the 'United' Kingdom right now!

Before I get carried away with my stories, some important news: Canon Keith Richards will be licensed as our new Rector by + Mark, Bishop of Horsham, at 7.30pm on **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019**. Do come! We are hoping that Fr Keith will be able to move into the Rectory in early February, and we are all very much looking forward to his arrival as our Rector in time for the start of Lent.

I do hope you all enjoyed your Christmas - and perhaps had the opportunity to sing, listen to singing, or to eat and drink with others in a friendly and heart-warming manner. I've been reflecting, as many will have, on the birth of our Lord Jesus, especially the journey that Mary and Joseph made, with a donkey, some 60 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. She was heavily pregnant, and somehow they all just made it in time.

It reminded me of a much shorter journey (to Cuckfield) that Julia made with a 'donkey' in 1986 when she too was heavily pregnant with a baby boy. It was a cold, April evening and the contractions were coming every two minutes. Her 'ass' wanted to get some sleep, ignoring the signs of imminent birth. Idiot!

Every bump in the road evoked a groan from the rear car seats, but happily we just made it to the hospital car park, and the baby was born at midnight - in the dubious comfort of a Vauxhall Cavalier hatchback. The midwives had all of 15 seconds to prepare, so no time for plastic gloves. Mary certainly had the longer journey with Jesus, but I think Joseph made rather better arrangements for his wife than I did...

So a baby boy has been born! Jesus is a week or two old by now. In a few weeks, his parents will take him to Jerusalem for Mary's purification ceremony (celebrated 3<sup>rd</sup> February). But first, at our Family Service on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> January, we think about the visit of the Magi to see the baby. These wise men, probably from Babylon in Iraq, showed remarkable tenacity and vision. We celebrate their endeavour over 2000 years later.

These renowned astrologers of world events bothered to travel some 800 miles, by camel or horse. Their reputation was such that King Herod sought them out; but they ignored Herod's entreaties once they realised his duplicitous intentions. As we know, he then tried to eliminate this long-foretold Messiah by a programme of mass murder.

In contrast, the Magi wanted to meet, honour and worship Him.

I'm with the Magi. You too?