

# 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020 – Morning Service

## Carol Service

Rev Michael Payne

### Advent Candle Liturgy

*“Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”*

### Advent 4 - Candle of Waiting with Faithfulness

The first candle reminds us of the light of expectant hope of the prophets. The second candle reminds us of the patience of John the Baptist who proclaimed Christ’s coming in faith. The third candle reminds us of the great light and joy which filled Mary as she was chosen by God. The fourth candle reminds us of the **faithfulness of God** who in Christ has created a new covenant with us.

*[After the Candle is lit we pray]*

O God, when we think of the birth of your Son we think of love and light and gifts and happy times. But, most of all, we think of Him, as our constant companion – our Guide and Helper. May we faithfully live the way Jesus has taught us so that we may show the real meaning of his birth, life, death and resurrection.

**Amen**

### Call to Worship – Psalms 33:20

We Wait in hope for the Lord, he is our help and our shield.

### StF 214 – Once in Royal David’s City

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| 1) Once in royal David's city<br>Stood a lowly cattle-shed,<br>Where a mother laid her baby<br>In a manger for his bed:<br>Mary was that mother mild,<br>Jesus Christ her little child.                   | 3) And our eyes at last shall see him,<br>Through his own redeeming love,<br>For that child so dear and gentle<br>Is our Lord in heaven above;<br>And he leads his children on<br>To the place where he is gone.     |
| 2) He came down to earth from heaven<br>Who is God and Lord of all,<br>And his shelter was a stable,<br>And his cradle was a stall;<br>With the needy, poor and lowly<br>Lived on earth our Saviour holy. | 4) Not in that poor lowly stable,<br>With the oxen standing by,<br>We shall see him; but in heaven,<br>Set at God's right hand on high;<br>There his children gather round<br>Bright like stars, with glory crowned. |

*Cecil Frances Alexander CCL No. 515642*

### Prayer

Lord, you are the constant in all creation, always present, always will be.

We praise you for your greatness, which holds our smallness, which in Jesus you knew.

We praise you for your majesty in Jesus clothed in our humanity.

We praise you for your sovereignty embracing our frailty, your holiness, which reveals our sinfulness, your wholeness revealing our brokenness.

Lord of all time and space we praise you that in Christ you came to enter into your creation in a new way; you came and shared all that life means to us. We praise you that through that self-giving love and grace, by your grace, we may now enter into an eternal relationship with Jesus and know the blessing of your Kingdom. We praise you that through faith in Jesus you can forgive our sinfulness and heal our brokenness. In this moment we pause and bring our need of forgiveness and healing before you.

*[Silence]*

In this Advent season we praise you for the coming of Christ as Saviour of the world and as our Saviour who responds to our needs and proclaims to us “your sins are forgiven.” **Amen.**

### **Reading: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

### **StF 173 – Into the darkness**

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| 1) Into the darkness of this world,<br>Into the shadows of the night;<br>Into this loveless place You came,<br>Lightened our burdens, eased our pain,<br>And made these hearts Your home.<br>Into the darkness once again,<br>O come, Lord Jesus, come. | 3) O Holy Child, Emmanuel,<br>Hope of the ages, God with us,<br>Visit again this broken place,<br>Till all the earth declares Your praise,<br>And Your great mercies own.<br>Now let Your love be born in us,<br>O come, Lord Jesus, come. |
| Ch) <i>Come with Your love to make us whole,<br/>Come with Your light to lead us on,<br/>Driving the darkness far from our souls:<br/>O come, Lord Jesus, come.</i>   | E) <i>Come in Your glory, take Your place,<br/>Jesus, the name above all names,<br/>We long to see You face to face,<br/>O come, Lord Jesus, come.</i>   |
| 2) Into the longing of our souls,<br>Into these heavy hearts of stone,<br>Shine on us now Your piercing light,<br>Order our lives and souls aright,<br>By grace and love unknown,<br>Until in You our hearts unite,<br>O come, Lord Jesus, come.        |  |

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### **Reading: Luke 2:1-7**

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

## StF 213 – O Little town of Bethlehem

- 1) O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark street shineth  
The everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.
- 2) O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And peace to all the earth!  
For Christ is born of Mary;  
And, gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love.
- 3) How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him still  
The dear Christ enters in.
- 4) O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in;  
Be born in us today!  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Immanuel!

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## Reading: Luke 2:8-20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told.

## StF 206 – It was on a starry night

- 1) It was on a starry night  
When the hills were bright,  
Earth lay sleeping, sleeping calm and still.  
Then in a cattle shed  
In a manger bed,  
A boy was born  
King of all the world.
  - 2) Soon the shepherds came that way  
Where the baby lay  
And were kneeling, kneeling by his side,  
And their hearts believed once more  
For the peace of all,  
For a boy was born  
King of all the world.
- Ch) *And all the angels sang for him,  
The bells of heaven rang for him,  
For a boy was born King of all the world.  
And all the angels sang for him,  
The bells of heaven rang for him,  
For a boy was born King of all the world.*

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## **Reading: John 1:1-14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

## **Christmas Message**

It was back in 2017 I was speaking to an optician and suggested they should get ready for an advertising campaign in 2019 along the lines of "Get ready for 2020 vision- get your eyes tested now." Who had 2020 vision for this past year, 2020? No one on earth could have predicted the year we have been living through as individuals, communities, countries, indeed as a world. Within this country the year began with Brexit and it is ending with Brexit on the news. In between the news has been dominated by weather and health; two subjects people normally like to talk about – but perhaps not this year.

Can you remember the weather of this past year and what has happened or have you forgotten many of the events of 2020? The weather caused many people to have to leave homes because of flooding both in February and August and then during the summer there was a heat wave, which many could not cope with. On the 7th Dec there was a Panorama programme looking back at the year and projecting forwards as to how things could be in the future if we do not address the issues around global warming and the resulting changes to weather patterns around the world but particularly on our own island.

During Lent some of us were reading a book by Ruth Valerio, "Saying Yes to life", which raised such issues but due to the Corona Virus the groups studies had to stop. This year, for many, has been one of the hardest of their lives due to the limitations on activities, fear of catching Covid, and for others living with the results of people close to them contracting Covid. I have not been in the past, and I am still not, one who would get to the end of a year and think "I'm glad that one is over a new year will mark a change." The truth is the move from 2020 to 2021 will not make the slightest difference in the reality of the situation unless behaviour and attitudes change amongst the majority of the people in the world.

We need a world where people are less "self-centred" and more "other-centred". This is the order God created human beings to live in. To live in social community and interacting with others was and is God's purpose for humanity. "Let us create humankind in OUR image." God is community at the centre of His being, our Trinitarian God. The Christmas message reminds us of many things within it including the the poor and the wealthy, the weak and the powerful, a world of political oppression and family anxieties. It was into such a world a baby was born who is the focal point of the story and a message of hope in a difficult world.

Many years later when John reflected on the life of Jesus he wrote – "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." Without light 2020 vision is useless for in total darkness we cannot see anything however good or bad our eyes. The light of Christ gives us a way to look at the reality of life with a positive outlook for we know that God is good and faithful and ultimately love wins. Many a film and book will want to portray that message, but it is in the words of the Bible that the truth is revealed upon which such hope, in books and films, can place hope.

The one born in a stable, who died on a cross, arose out of a tomb and ascended into the heart of the Godhead for all time, spoke a message which included; “love the Lord your God with your whole beings and love your neighbour”; “love one another as I have loved you.” That is Jesus, he is why we can enter 2021 with hope; despite what happens with weather and health God is still God and Jesus is the Saviour of the world, his message is still true “Love is the ultimate.”

### Prayers of Intercession

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|----------------------|---|
| L: Waiting for what? | R: <b>For all to have clean drinking water.</b>       |
| L: Waiting for what? | R: <b>For all to have food.</b>                       |
| L: Waiting for what? | R: <b>For all to be treated equally.</b>              |
| L: Waiting for what? | R: <b>For the rich to share their wealth.</b>         |
| L: Waiting for what? | R: <b>For all lives to matter.</b>                    |
| L: Waiting for what? | R: <b>Healing and wholeness.</b>                      |
| L: Waiting for what? | R: <b>Those who mourn to be comforted</b>             |
| L: Waiting for what? | R: <b>For Jesus to be born into the lives of all.</b> |

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

### StF 202 – Hark the herald

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| 1) Hark! The herald-angels sing<br>Glory to the new-born King,<br>Peace on earth, and mercy mild,<br>God and sinners reconciled.<br>Joyful, all ye nations, rise,<br>Join the triumph of the skies;<br>With the angelic host proclaim:<br>'Christ is born in Bethlehem.' | 2) Christ, by highest heaven adored,<br>Christ, the everlasting Lord,<br>Late in time behold him come,<br>Offspring of a virgin's womb.<br>Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!<br>Hail, the incarnate Deity!<br>Pleased as man with men to dwell,<br>Jesus, our Immanuel:                      |
| Ch) <i>Hark! The herald-angels sing<br/>Glory to the new-born King.</i>  | 3) Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!<br>Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!<br>Light and life to all he brings,<br>Risen with healing in his wings.<br>Mild he lays his glory by,<br>Born that man no more may die,<br>Born to raise the sons of earth,<br>Born to give them second birth: |

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### Closing Prayer/Blessing

As surely as the Lord came, as surely as he will come again, so you can be sure that he is with you and you with him, and so it will be forever. Go from this worship with the Blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit upon you and within you now and always. **Amen**