

Thursday 24th December 2020

Zoom Watchnight Service

This service will be zoomed at 11.30pm on Christmas Eve, to use this service at the same time you need to begin reading at 11.35pm as the aim is to sit in silence leading up to midnight. At midnight you might like to light a candle.

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.
God is ever present, around us and within us,
though separate let us worship together in God.

Opening words

Tonight, as the stars shine,
and the glory that is God burns within creation,
time and space pause,
and from the depths a new creation emerges.

We remember,
the angels, the journey, the arrival, the glory.
We remember the mixing of shepherds and kings,
the sounds and smells of life in all its rawness.
We remember how this story has touched our lives,
through childhood and adulthood
and here and now we pause,
waiting once more for the star to guide us to this special place
where the impossible becomes possible.

Tonight, we sit and wait,
here in our own place,
not a palace, or a special place,
simply our place,
for here God is with us,
for God is everywhere.

Tonight, we sit and wait
for the moment when time and space are paused,
just for a millisecond,
and we remember why we are here,
and how we are here
and who else is here with us,
before we journey on in time and space.

Heather Whyte 2020

Prayer

God of the universe, creator of stars and planets, creator of all things we gather in your presence to await the dawn of Christmas day. As we wait, we reflect on your many gifts and we offer our thanks and our praise for the wonder of your love and grace. In oneness with Christians around the world we share together the words that Jesus taught the disciples,

Our Father...

Reading

Isaiah 9.2b-7

Carol It was on a starry night

[Listen here](#)

Story/Reflection

Wenceslas

I remember a winter in the mid nineteen-nineties when we lived in Essex and over three feet of snow fell overnight. We had to dig ourselves out of the house. There are times when it snows so hard that it is impossible to get out and the best thing to do then is to stay in the warm, closing the curtains to keep the cold out.

Once upon a time, a long time ago, in Bohemia, a part of Germany, the story goes that it snowed just like that. It was the day after Christmas, which is known as the feast of Stephen, and in the palace they were getting ready to celebrate the twelve days of Christmas. Outside was cold and dark but inside was warm, with lots of food and the jesters and jugglers ready to entertain.

Just as they were settling in for the night the King decided to have a last look out of the window and he drew back the curtain letting a great draught in to the room which made everyone turn around. Looking out at the scene all he could see was snow, the frozen river and a few deer scraping at the hard ground looking for food. Then he noticed a figure in amongst the trees, struggling through the snow. His clothes appeared ragged and each step seemed to take all his effort.

The King called to his servant boy, Elias, and asked him if he recognised the figure. Elias did recognise the figure, he had seen him before, but he was not sure he should say who it was so, instead he told the King he thought it was someone who lived on the edge of the forest. Next minute, the King grabbed him by the arm and pulling him towards the door he shouted to anyone who was listening that they were going to share Christmas with the person in the woods

Elias, when he could catch his breath, wondered was the King really going out into the cold and gloom of the evening, they might get lost. The King gathered together candles and food and other things, pulled on a coat, then he went out and loaded everything onto a sledge. Elias, quickly gathering his wits, put on his own coat and followed the King outside. It was icy cold and dark, and as they stood there, snow began to fall again. When they left the cover of the palace it was so windy it took Elias' breath away and he longed to turn back. The King, big, strong and brave, at least in Elias' eyes, did not seem to notice as he walked on into the gathering storm. Elias followed muttering under his breath.

The snow was already deep, drifts so deep in places that they could have swallowed a boy, and the wind whipped the snow into a frenzy, and froze their breath in the night air. Elias could hardly see, and the night grew darker as they walked. He was cold, and tired and the last thing he had wanted to do was go for a walk, but there he was. They walked further, towards the trees and it got darker still, Elias was really struggling now, he was getting left behind and then he stumbled. The King turned and looked back and saw Elias on the ground, he rushed towards him and pulled him up, he told Elias to keep close to him and walk in his footsteps, that way he would be sheltered from the storm.

They set off again, Elias keeping close to the King, and he seemed to draw strength from the King, and he felt warmer. The King began to sing, and Elias joined in, and so they travelled on in search of the one figure who has started all this. They entered the forest and Elias drew closer to the King, he was scared, he did not like the forest and he was sure he could hear animals moving around them, then a wolf howled and Elias almost stumbled, but the King kept on walking, seeming to fear nothing.

Then, out of the gloom a shape emerged and then a light. It was a wooden shack, and the light was a candle. The King knocked on the door and after a moment it opened a crack and Elias could see two eyes peering out into the dark night. Elias realised where they were, just as a voice called his name and asked who was with him. Elias answered, saying that he was there with the King and the door opened wide, and a figure ushered them inside. Soon, the King was unloading the sledge and they lit a fire and laid food on the table, fine Christmas food, bread and pies, cheese and nuts and a figgy pudding. In the light from the fire the King saw hungry faces, eyes wide in disbelief at the feast

before them. He smiled, and soon everyone was smiling, and laughing as they gathered around the table to eat an amazing feast. They sang together into the night and Elias and the King stayed until morning. In the daylight the King could see how fragile the shack was and taking tools from the sledge he and Elias began to patch up the holes and mend the shutters, to keep out the worst of the weather. When they had finished, the King and Elias set off for the palace with an empty sledge and a warm glow in their hearts. The journey back seemed to take no time and as they approached the palace, the door was flung open and anxious faces appeared, glad to have the King back safely.

The King asked Elias not to tell anyone what they had done, and Elias kept their secret for as long as the King lived, but after he told his family all about a trip that had changed his life, the night they went to take Christmas to the woodsman, because it didn't just happen once.

The King was called Wenceslas, and after his death his story was shared in words and in song. Wenceslas was a Christian who shared his story and the good things from his land with the community around him. After his death he was made a saint and millions of pilgrims visit his tomb, their footsteps telling of his goodness.

The carol that tells this story is not about the birth of Jesus but about the love that Jesus brought, the love that makes us want to share what we have with those who have nothing.

What will you share this Christmas?

Carol Good King Wenceslas
Listen [here](#)

Reading Luke 2.1-20

Carol Silent Night
Listen [here](#)

Silence

At midnight light a candle

Prayer

Loving God, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, a boy born in humble surroundings who grew in the oneness that is the knowledge of you to become a light to all who met him. This child knew a different way of being, a way of love and he shared all he knew with those around him, calling them to a different way of being. We hear the call echoing down through centuries of faith, and we celebrate our own birth into this new way of living.

We pray for all children who are born tonight whether in hospitals, homes or the street, may they know love in their lives and be nurtured to reach the full potential of their humanity.

We pray for those who are homeless, living on the streets, and dependant on others for clean clothes and food. May they sense your presence with them through the kindness of strangers.

We pray for refugees fleeing injustice and war, walking long miles and risking danger to reach a new safety. May they sense your presence with them through the generosity of the stranger and the welcome of a new land.

We pray for all who are struggling with changed circumstances, those who are caring for loved ones, grieving the loss of loved ones or facing the fear of losing their jobs or their homes. May they sense your presence in the doctors and nurses who offer help and care, the food bank workers who facilitate food for the table, support organisations who have collected and provided gifts and the neighbours who have offered help.

We pray for people who are lonely and isolated, people missing the presence of loved ones this Christmas, and people who are trapped in the terrors of their own minds. May they be helped to know they are not alone.

We pray for ourselves. May this Christmas be a time of joy and hope in the midst of fear and chaos, and may we find new and creative ways of sharing the faith we hold within our hearts with others, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amen.

Carol 160 O Come all ye faithful

Listen [here](#)

Blessing

May the joy that is knowing God, source of all being, the light that is Jesus and the peace of oneness in the Spirit, bring us hope this Christmas. Amen