

Sunday 27th December 2020

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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.

Suggested Hymn Good Christians all rejoice

[Listen here](#)

Prayer

Eternal God, source of all being, we come to worship you and to bring our thanksgiving for the wonder of the Christmas story. As we have celebrated, remembering the birth of Jesus, anticipating the message of love that this child would bring to the world and the challenge to live simply and generously we think of all the gifts with which we are surrounded. This year has been strange, and our celebrations have been different but the reason for our celebration remains the same, the birth of a child who would change the way we see the world, see ourselves and understand you. We thank you for the gift of this child.

We thank you for the gifts of creation, the variety that surrounds us and the beauty of plants and trees. As we look out on our gardens, we see the effects of winter, but we also see the first hints of new life, small shoots of green appearing through damp and sometimes hard soil and we remember that even though the world is looking ravaged by Covid there are shoots of hope, for you are always creating and your love holds us even in the darkest of times. We thank you for your presence with us.

We thank you for the gifts of family and friends, good neighbours, and the unexpected help of strangers. We are all one in your love, and although we have not been able to meet, we have still been able to share through creative communication and the work of those who have delivered cards and gifts around the country. We thank you for the gift of communication.

As we worship together and yet apart, we are united in the words that Jesus taught the disciples and we say together,

Our father

Readings Isaiah 61:10-62:3 (Contemporary English Version)
Galatians 4:4-7 (Contemporary English Version)

Watch [The lion, the Unicorn and me](#)

A dramatization of the book by Jannette Winterson at St Mary's Church, Beverly

Suggested hymn Go tell it on the mountain

[Listen here](#)

Reflection

Within church we often talk about the good news but how good are we at proclaiming the good news? The Christmas story is interesting, the story we tell year on year is an amalgamation of an amalgamation. The gospels of Luke and Matthew are both compilations based on Mark, another source called Q, and possibly other stories as well, we take a bit of Luke and a bit of Matthew and call it the Christmas Story. Matthew does not mention a journey to Bethlehem and there are no shepherds, but we do have a visit by wise men which introduces the star, and a very grisly story about Herod and his attempts to ensure his Kingship remains intact. Luke is a storyteller and weaves a wonderful story of angels and shepherds around a lot of Old Testament prophecy, but even he does not mention a donkey, a key feature in our version of the story. Luke has Jesus being taken to the temple in Jerusalem, fulfilling Jewish Law. So, we might ask ourselves, what exactly are we proclaiming, what is the good news?

For me, I am called to share my story, how the life and ministry of the adult Jesus has changed the way I approach life, how it has changed the way I understand God and that continues to evolve and change as I study and read more of discoveries about our world and our humanity. There are many people for whom the Bible is difficult in our modern pluralistic world, and a literalistic approach to scripture often

is a barrier to people approaching God, just as the dogmatic approach of the Scribes and Pharisees was, in the stories of Jesus this was seen as a barrier to people finding God.

The celebration of Isaiah is a reminder that we have something to celebrate, and in Paul's letter to the Galatians he explains what he believes is at the heart of our celebration, our understanding of ourselves as children of God. From the perspective of quantum theology, this is to see ourselves as a part of creation and creation is God for God is everywhere and everything. This is often referred to as oneness, the interconnection of all things through the very source of all things. Understanding ourselves as one, is, for me, at the heart of Jesus message, at the heart of the good news we are called to share. Oneness is about interdependence, our actions affect others, and the actions of others affects us, we are living this at the moment with Covid and it highlights the responsibility we each hold at the heart of oneness. How we behave will change life for others which is quite a responsibility. The good news is about generosity and sharing, but it is more than that it is about loving selflessly and allowing the needs of others to impinge on our choices and our lives.

The writings of the authors of the gospels have an effect on our lives but it is the interpretation of those stories that we should proclaim as the stories themselves are but a means of understanding more about the message of Jesus and more about God. The Christmas story is a catalyst, it creates an opportunity, and an invitation, to engage with others and share our own story. I have lots of children's stories about Christmas but very few of them tell the Christmas Story, they do however contain something of the message of Christmas, the effect and importance of love and acceptance, the importance of understanding that we are, each and every one of us, a child of God, and important. They are an opportunity to explore the essence of what it is to be human in all the fullness of love.

As you journey through the coming weeks why not reflect on the stories that have shown you something of the message of Jesus and perhaps talk to one another about where you have found your inspiration through the years, and how your understanding of God has evolved. In this way we continue the celebration of Christmas and proclaim the message of hope in story of humanity's continuing journey with and in God.

Meditation

The journey was not straightforward:
often we had to change course, go in a new direction.

Everything around was changing,
people, places, prophecies and power.
In the twinkling of a star the
polarity shifted and a new journey began,
heralded by angels
and anchored in the vulnerability and miracle of birth.
Not for us the security of tradition,
you came and called us to leave all behind and embark on something new.

And we do, at least most of the time but
now and again we forget, and long for the
days when we knew what was expected of us and how to achieve it.

But that was then and this is now and
expecting today to be the same as yesterday is not
your way. For you each day is a new adventure,
onward and upward towards the kingdom,
never knowing what tomorrow will bring;
daring to dream, and holding out hope and pointing in faith
to epiphany and beyond.

Heather Whyte Jan 07

Suggested hymn Who would think that what was needed
[Listen here](#)

Prayers

Loving God as we remember the message of Jesus, we lift to you the world in which we live. It is a world full of pain and strife, a world of barriers and divisions in which love often seems overwhelmed by fear and intolerance. You call us to love one another, to set aside differences and learn to live as on.

May the choices we make reflect your call, and our words and actions build bridges to the kingdom.

We pray for the people of countries where power and control put lives at risk, where governments create unease and suspicion and injustice fosters resentment and creates need. We pray for people in countries where health care is scarce and a lack of technology creates disease, where children die of hunger or become orphans, abandoned to living on the streets. Loving God, you offer a solution.

May the choices we make reflect your call, and our words and actions build bridges to the kingdom.

We pray for people who are ill because of Covid 19, for families torn apart by grief, and people suffering isolation and loneliness amidst thriving communities. We have seen love in action in the kindness of strangers and dedication of workers and we give thanks, but you call us to make a difference, and we pray for the inspiration to find creative solutions to the problems created by Covid 19 within our communities and around the world.

May the choices we make reflect your call, and our words and actions build bridges to the kingdom.

We pray for people whose lives have been changed by the effects of lockdown, people who have lost their jobs and those who fear for their homes. We pray for those whose way of life is different and who find themselves homeless because of the breakdown of family. We pray for people who find themselves refugees, fleeing danger and difficult situations. May the message of Jesus and the story of Christmas inspire us to work for oneness and reach out to those whose lives are so different from our own.

May the choices we make reflect your call, and our words and actions build bridges to the kingdom.

Loving God as we look to the future may we hold on to the vision of hope that is the message of Jesus. We look forward to a new day when we can meet and share together in familiar ways. We pray for our families and friends, for neighbours and strangers with whom we are one in your love. As we celebrate together may our shared stories blend into a love song of the kingdom and herald, like the angels, and new way of being. Amen.

Offertory

As we continue to worship apart but together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

Carol

Come and join the celebration

[Listen here](#)

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.