

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020

2nd in Advent, you are invited to have a single candle to light during the service

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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.

Glorious God,  
living with us and within us,  
open our eyes to your presence,  
our hearts to your love  
and our mouths to worship you.  
Revealing our love for you  
may our words and actions inspire others to see You,  
the God of all creation.

**Suggested Hymn**      People, look East. The time is near  
[Watch here](#)

### **Prayer**

Loving God as we prepare for Christmas, we gather to praise you and give you thanks. We remember with gratitude the many gifts in our life, a place to live in safety, a fire to keep us warm, food to sustain us and the beauty of creation to inspire us. Every day brings new gifts, and our lives are filled with wonder, thank you seems to small a gesture. We remember the good things that have happened this week and we thank you for security and surprises. We also remember the things we failed to do and the opportunities to share your love with others that we missed, we are sorry. We offer you the coming week and pray that in our thanksgiving we will find ways to be generous in our giving. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus and say together  
Our father ....

**Advent Candle** (You are invited to light a single candle at the appropriate moment)

### **Ruth 4:13-17 (Contemporary English Version)**

*Boaz married Ruth, and the LORD blessed her with a son. After his birth, the women said to Naomi:*

*Praise the LORD! Today he has given you a grandson to take care of you. We pray that the boy will grow up to be famous everywhere in Israel. He will make you happy and take care of you in your old age, because he is the son of your daughter-in-law. And she loves you more than seven sons of your own would love you.*

*Naomi loved the boy and took good care of him. The neighbourhood women named him Obed, but they called him "Naomi's Boy."*

*When Obed grew up, he had a son named Jesse, who later became the father of King David.*

### **Luke 2:1-7 (Contemporary English Version)**

*About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.*

*Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. So, Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.*

*Mary was engaged to Joseph and travelled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Around the world millions of people risk dangerous journeys and find themselves homeless at the end of the road.

This year many 'inns' have been forced to close and innkeepers are desperate and worried, and long for the day when there is 'no room at the inn'.

### **Prayer**

We pray for all those who work in hospitality and find themselves in need this Christmas. We pray for those who have left the familiar to follow the hope of a better life and found themselves homeless, and we pray for those who offer compassionate love to the stranger. May we be creative in our thinking and generous in our giving to those in need this Christmas.

### **Light Candle**

We light this candle for all innkeepers and travellers, and those who light the candle of hope in the darkness of despair.

### **Sing** (*tune St Bees*)

In the darkness comes a light,  
light of hope for all to see.  
Hold the light within your heart  
pray for all humanity.

### **Intro**

Today we celebrate the gift of giving. Our giving is a response to the love of God as we try to follow the way of Jesus, a child born in a stable who changed the world and the way we understand God. Jesus was a gift to the world, just as every child is a gift to the world, however, there are still too many children born into poverty and even more who find themselves abandoned through illness and hardship. We are brothers and sisters in God and so as we remember the story of Jesus, we remember also that what we have been given is a gift to share. Let's remind ourselves of the story of Jesus birth.

Watch [The Christmas Story in 3 minutes](#)

### **Mary**

Sometimes we get a surprise gift, something we are not expecting. Mary was not expecting a child, but she responded to the angel's message with humility and grace. Unexpected gifts can be exciting, they are a sign of love and we are thankful. It is also lovely to give an unexpected gift and today as we celebrate the gift of giving we think especially of the ways we can be part of an unexpected gift. Mary was thankful and she put her thanks into words using the words of another woman from the Old Testament.

**Suggested Hymn**      Tell out my soul

[Listen here](#)

### **Stable (Innkeeper)**

The innkeeper was different, he was probably just as stressed as the others, after all his inn was full, but he took pity on Mary and Joseph and offered them the gift of a stable in which to rest. It wasn't the Ritz but it was shelter and even though the baby was born in a stable he was still special, still loved by God.

Around the world there are people who live in horrible places, homes made from rusting sheets of metal and old cloths, homes without any water or toilets, smelly places, babies are born there. These people are still special, still loved by God.

How might we offer the gift of love to them?

**Suggested Hymn**      When out of poverty is born

[Watch here](#)

Wise men

The wise men were astronomers, they studied the stars and they noticed a new star which they somehow knew was important. They travelled a long way until the star was directly over their heads and there they found the new baby. They brought special gifts (Gold, frankincense and myrrh).

Today we are celebrating the gift of giving, and this year more than any other we are aware of many people, especially children, for whom Christmas will be a real struggle. We have heard of so many random acts of kindness throughout the year and the way that this has lifted people in a time of isolation and loneliness. There is a real isolation in being unable to provide your child with a gift at Christmas, and this year there are too many families who will struggle to provide food, let alone the familiar treats. We can make a difference. If we make the decision to have slightly less, then we can offer something more. I know that Wigmore have had a wonderful response to their collection for Women's Aid, and some of you may have supported the Salvation Army Appeal for toys. Many of you will have popped something into the Food Bank Collections or donated online and all this will make a huge difference. We can continue to celebrate the gift of giving throughout Christmas by being aware and sharing generously but Christmas is the catalyst, to follow the way of Jesus means to give generously to others throughout the year. As church we may work together to give on special occasions, but it is as individuals that we can make the most difference by being people of giving throughout the year sharing God's love with others because of the message of Jesus.

Suggested song            Little drummer boy  
[watch here](#)

### Prayers

Loving God as we wait in Advent, growing our souls through prayer, reflection and time, we offer you our thanks for the opportunities each day brings to make a difference in someone's life. Covid 19 has changed the world and our approach to time, some people have had too much time whilst others not enough time and at times we have all felt trapped by a situation over which we have no control. We have had to learn to be differently, and to share differently.

**Gracious God may our response to your love be creative and generous giving.**

We give thanks for all those who have worked to keep the essential aspects of life in place, the key workers and all who have found new ways to work and often found themselves working longer hours whilst others are finding new interests and pursuits to fill empty hours. As we rejoice that scientists have found potential vaccines, beacons of hope in the darkness of Covid, we pray for a responsible response to the gift of vaccines. We pray that people will trust those who have tested these vaccines and help to control the effects of Covid by accepting the gift of a vaccine, and we pray for a selfless generosity from business that will offer this hope to all countries regardless of their ability to cover costs.

**Gracious God may our response to your love be creative and generous giving.**

We give thanks for the hope we have witnessed through the many random acts of kindness offered during the pandemic, and we pray that this may continue beyond the pandemic and we will continue to value and care for each other within our communities. As we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus may our response to your gift of love be an outpouring of loving generosity through our support for the organisations that seek to support those most in need this Christmas.

**Gracious God may our response to your love be creative and generous giving.**

On all that we have already given and all we will give we ask your blessing that these gifts may find their place in the world, bringing hope into the lives of those in need, and making a difference in the lives of those caught in the traps of poverty, violence and loneliness. We pray for those who offer time to support others, may they be wise in their work and feel your presence with them in the gifting of goods to those who find themselves in difficulty.

**Gracious God may our response to your love be creative and generous giving.**

Loving God, you are always with us, as we sense your presence may we open our hearts to you and to one another and share together in fellowship. May our love overflow into our conversations and actions in the coming week and change the lives of friends and strangers because of the message of Jesus. Amen

**Our offering to God.**

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

**Suggested Hymn** Love came down at Christmas

[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.