

WELCOME AND NOTICES

- There will be no Wednesday Communion on 29th December.
- There will be a service on Sunday 2nd January at 10.30am unless the government applies another lockdown.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Messiah to Be Born in Bethlehem
But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, are the smallest town in Judah. Your family is almost too small to count, but the 'Ruler of Israel' will come from you to rule for me. His beginnings are from ancient times, from long, long ago [...] Like a shepherd, he will lead his people in the wonderful name of the LORD his God. And they will live in safety because then his greatness will be known all over the world. He will bring a time of peace.
Micah 5: 2-5 (ERV)

OPENING PRAYER

God of glory, your splendour shines from a manger in Bethlehem, where the Light of the World is humbly born into the darkness of human night. Open our eyes to Christ's presence in the shadows of our world, so that we, like him, may become beacons of your justice, and defenders of all for whom there is no room. **Amen.**

SONG/HYMNS

O Little town of Bethlehem.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_q430z13oc

**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 streets shineth
The everlasting Light;**

**The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.**

**For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep the Angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.**

**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.**

**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 Emmanuel!**

O come, O come, Emmanuel
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4Q_Q-4

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

CONFESSION

Lord God, you have shown us such love, and stretched out your arms to draw us into your embrace. Yet so often we fail to show that love within our lives, or recognise its source. Forgive our short-sightedness, for the times we've failed to see your love in the generosity of friend or stranger, the shoulder to cry on, the willing ear to listen, a word of encouragement, holding our hand that extra mile. Forgive us for failing to notice how much you care for us. **Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God is slow to anger and full of compassion. He forgives all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

OFFERTORY

Help us to be generous givers, dear Lord, both of our money and our lives, that we might make a difference in this place. We ask this through your son, our Saviour

Jesus Christ, who gave all that He was that we might know life in all its fullness.
Amen.

READING: Luke 2:8-20 (NIV)

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 that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, 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 heaven,
and on earth peace to those 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.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

SONG/HYMN

Angels from the realms of glory
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oynqngz-so8>

**Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant light:
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen his natal star:
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In his temple shall appear.
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**Though an infant now we view him,
He shall fill his Father's throne,
Gather all the nations to him;
Every knee shall then bow down:
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

REFLECTION: WHAT'S THE TIME (6)? IT'S TIME TO FIND THE SAVIOUR

Happy Boxing Day. I hope your Christmas has so far been full of joy. Today we come to a passage in Luke's gospel that is full of joy. In fact the whole of the birth narrative in Luke could be summed up in one word – joy. So, let's take a look at the story of the shepherds.

Part of the story of the birth of Christ, according to Luke, focuses on the visit of an angel of the Lord to some shepherds. "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (2:10) declares the angel. There's that word – joy, and joy will be for everyone, including you and me this Boxing Day. This news from the angel of the Messiah's birth wasn't just for them to hold on to. It was and is for everyone. All the waiting of the prophets was over. The time had come. "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (2:11). The Messiah had finally come and heaven's angels could do no other but break into songs of praise. It is as if they couldn't wait to announce the arrival of God's anointed one. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests" (2:14). The Saviour was born for you so that you can know the joy of peace with God.

The second part of the story concerns the shepherds hurrying off and seeking the Saviour born and placed in a manger. It wasn't enough for the shepherds to hear the good news about the birth of the Messiah, they had to go and find out for themselves. So, they set off in search of Christ. It was time to find the Saviour. There wouldn't have been many new-born babies placed in a manger, so when

the shepherds found him, they told Mary and Joseph about what the angel had said, and then they went and told everyone else (v17).

How can you search for the Saviour?

There are three things you can do:

1. Read the Scriptures which contain all that is needed for you to find the Saviour. Maybe you could start with Luke's gospel.
2. Pray and invite the Lord into your life. Welcome him as a permanent guest in your home and a life-long friend by your side.
3. Go and tell someone what you have found in Jesus, and tell them what you have done.

If you haven't yet found the Saviour, it's time to seek him. The shepherds were transformed by their heavenly encounter, and you can be transformed too. You can experience the joy of the shepherds. That night changed history forever, and it can change your history too.

Seeking the Saviour is the best way to celebrate Christmas. And the only way to seek him is to seek him with all your heart. Allow his presence to capture your heart. And don't think you aren't good enough. The shepherds weren't good enough in society's eyes. Yet it was to them that the birth of Christ was announced. God will come to you if you seek him. It's not about your own goodness but about your desire to meet with him. As the adult Jesus said, "Seek and you will find" (Matt. 7:7). There is no better Christmas present than finding the Saviour.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Holy Jesus, by being born one of us, and lying humbly in a manger, you show how much God loves the world. Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts, until we reach our home in heaven, and see you on your throne of glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth: accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you, our Saviour, and our eternal God.

Loving Jesus, you were born in a stable but worshipped by the angels. Be with all who are lonely, and with all who feel distant from celebrations. Be for us a living hope that lightens their hearts. And, as you healed the sick, Lord bring healing to those in our families who are ill or grieving today.

Christ born for us, Son of God, given for us, help us to know you, to worship and to serve you.

The kings, Lord, brought myrrh, frankincense, and gold. Lord, we have nothing of our own to bring; we bring you what you have given: our lives for your life.

Jesus, Saviour, son of Mary, you know us and love us, you share our lives and hear our prayer.

Glory to you forever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

SONG/HYMN

Shout to the Lord
www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7AYnQdAVZ0

My Jesus, my Saviour
Lord there is none like you
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of your mighty love
My comfort, my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will
roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have
in You.

My Jesus, my Saviour
Lord there is none like You
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of your mighty love
My Comfort
My Shelter

Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will
roar
At the sound of your name
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have
in You.

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

May God, who has called us out of
darkness into his marvellous light, bless us
and fill us with peace. May we be filled
with the wonder of Mary, the obedience
of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the
eagerness of the shepherds, the
determination of the magi, and the peace
of the Christ child.

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and
all those we love, all those we care for,
and all those we pray for, this day and
ever more. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.