

Welcome and Notices

Call to worship

Where babies have been safely born
Where travellers have found journey's end
Where greetings and gifts have crossed the world
Let us pray a welcome blessing in the name of Jesus
Amen.

Advent candles

Through Advent, we have lit four candles to guide us on our journey; these remind us of light, promise, the wilderness and Immanuel, God with us.

All four are brought together in the Christ Light that we light this Christmas Day.

Light the candle, saying:

'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...

This will be a sign for you:

you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth
and lying in a manger.'

Carol: Come and join the celebration

Come and join the celebration

It's a very special day

Come and share our jubilation;

There's a new King born today!

Verse 1

See, the shepherds

Hurry down to Bethlehem,

Gaze in wonder

At the Son of God who lay before them

Chorus

Come and join the celebration

It's a very special day

Come and share our jubilation;

There's a new King born today!

Verse 2

Wise men journey,

Led to worship by a star

Kneel in homage

Bringing precious gifts from lands afar, so

Chorus

Verse 3

"God is with us"

Round the world the message bring

He is with us

"Welcome", all the bells on earth are pealing

Chorus

Prayer:

As the Holy Child comes to birth Hurry us down to Bethlehem for rejoicing! As the Holy Child breaks into the world Hurry us down to Bethlehem for celebration! As the Holy Child awakes to the needs of the world Hurry us to his side for transformation! Though we have wandered long in dry lands Soon the waters of justice shall flow! Though the Star may have faded Soon we shall walk in the company of the Holy One! Though we have been a people lost in wilderness Soon the Holy One shall lead us on the road to freedom! Through the One who was, and is, and is yet to come, We are a people of promise! We are a people of hope! We are a people of love! Abundant God, Flesh of our Flesh, Food of our Hope, Water of Life, we rejoice in your arrival; fulfil our longing for your love. Amen

Reading: Video – Christ-mess

Message

What a Christmas this has been! If anyone had told me that one day we would not be able to celebrate Christmas with family and friends as we normally do, I would never have believed them! Normally we'd be encouraging everyone to join in our carol service, and to sing all our favourite carols we've all grown to love. Not this year.

It all seems like a bit of a mess doesn't it? It just doesn't seem to match the images of peace nativity scenes on the Christmas cards we send and receive at this time of the year. However, when we look at the world Jesus was born into over 2000 years ago, everything going on around him was a bit of a mess.

The king of Israel, Herod, was threatened by the news of Jesus. People were going to worship this baby, calling him King. Herod was raging with jealousy and wanted to kill Jesus, and he was the first of many people who wished to do the same. In other words, for the 33 years he lived on earth, Jesus was surrounded by a messy world.

Why is this baby Jesus so important? Born into a messy world, with a messy family history, he arrived to clean up our mess. Not a kind of Christmas mess like wrapping paper across the living room floor, or the dishes after Christmas lunch. He came for our messy lives.

The Bible says that Jesus has come to save people from their mess. This means their mistakes, their wrong decisions, and their shame. He comes to exchange the mess for hope, peace and love. He was, and is, the promise. The promise of new life.

The good news this Christmas and everyday is this - God doesn't need perfect people to fulfil his plan. He doesn't need our lives to be all neat and tidy. God knows that we aren't very good at keeping our lives free from mess, so he promises us a way to be part of his royal family even if we're not very good at being royal.

God weaved a story of hope, through the Old Testament stories of Abraham and David. He then presented Jesus, his only son, to pay the price for all of the mess we have created, and even the mess we still create today.

God promised the world a saviour, and he came through on his promise. Jesus enables us to be forgiven, and to exchange all of our mess for his peace. God also promises that one day, he will wipe away every tear from his people and live with them forever.

But now we continue to be the family of Jesus, sharing the good news until he comes again. We get to be Abraham's descendants, sharing the hope and peace of Jesus with everyone.

This Christmas we have had to do this very differently, and it's been really hard for us all. However, we can be at peace because of our King of Kings, Jesus, who offers life in all its fullness.

We can know that the mess in our own lives is no barrier to God. His family extends to the old and young, rich and poor, those who believe, and those who struggle with their faith.

Through Jesus, despite what our lives may look like, if we choose to accept his invitation then we ourselves become part of God's family. And this Christmas, you are warmly invited not only to join in the celebration, but to join the family and to play your part. The messy, joyful family of God!

Carol: Away in a manger

Prayers of Intercession

In the beginning – you were. In this moment – you are. You are strength and weakness. You are light and glory. You are God and you welcome us: you listen for our prayers ...

We pray today for peace, peace in Bethlehem, peace in the dark places of our world. We pray for leaders and negotiators, for peacemakers and peacekeepers, for fighters and prisoners, for all who are caught up in conflict, violence and fear. We pray for peace with integrity and with justice ... God, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

We pray for children everywhere, for the newly born, for those growing up among us, for those growing up in places where there is poverty and danger. We pray that they may be loved and welcomed and that they may know smiles and hope ... God, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

We pray for all who sit and eat with us today. We thank you for our families, for our friends, for those who love us, for those who share our laughter and pain. We pray for those who, by choice or by circumstance, eat alone. And we pray for justice for those who are hungry ... God, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

We pray for all who are sick and for those who care for them and pray for them. We pray for those who have died, for those we miss at our table. Tell them how much we love them, we miss them, we carry their stories in our lives ... God, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

We pray for ourselves, for our needs, our concerns, our hopes and our dreams ... God, in your mercy, Hear our prayer. Bright loving God, Emmanuel, God-with-us, help us to recognise you today and to welcome you into our lives in wonder, in truth and in holy joy. Amen

Carol: See Him lying on a bed of straw

1 See him lying on a bed of straw:
a draughty stable with an open door;
Mary cradling the babe she bore
the prince of glory is his name.

*O now carry me to Bethlehem
to see the Lord of love again:
just as poor as was the stable then,
the prince of glory when he came.*

2 Star of silver, sweep across the skies,
show where Jesus in the manger lies;
shepherds, swiftly from your stupor rise
to see the saviour of the world!

O now carry me...

3 Angels, sing again the song you sang,
sing the glory of God's gracious plan;

Sing that Beth'lem's little baby can
be the saviour of us all.

O now carry me...

4 Mine are riches, from your poverty,
from your innocence, eternity;
mine, forgiveness by your death for me,
child of sorrow for my joy.

O now carry me...

Benediction

May the song of the angels, the joy of the shepherds, the wonder of the wise men, and the peace of the newborn king fill our hearts and homes this Christmastime and always. Amen