



Dore Methodist Church

Weekly Update

4th December 2020.



Message from Gail.

Carols unpacked – Once in royal David's city.

As we travel through advent unpacking the story behind some of the carols we sing, this week's is one which is often sung at the beginning of the traditional nine lessons and carols service. It was written in 1848 by Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander, wife of the Bishop of Derry, and published in her collection of hymns for little children.

Once in royal, uses the birth of Jesus as a starting point to think about the life of Jesus as a young child, and his imagined relationship beyond babyhood with Mary his mother.

A thread running through the song is the lowliness of the baby's birth, upbringing and choice of company, compared with his position as 'God and Lord of all.' The word lowly is used no less than four times and the simplicity of the language is designed to communicate with a young audience. Most of the words have just one syllable; hardly any have more than two.

The carol also gives us a fascinating view of Victorian childhood. While telling the birth of Jesus in this simple and vivid language, Mrs Alexander breaks off the narrative to moralise about the expected behaviour of Christian children (who must always be mild, obedient good as he!) For her, high spirits and energetic behaviour have no part in the life of a Christian Child! Jesus lies in Mary's arms, loving and watching her, honouring and obeying her.

Furthermore, it's interesting to note how the carol starts with birth and finishes with death, with no mention of the adult Christ. Death was often tragically close to birth in the Victorian period and it was as well to be prepared for it from an early age. The concept of heaven we notice is simplified and defined as a geographical place 'on high' where children will be wearing white and crowned like stars (An Image drawn from Revelation). This may be a deliberate idealisation to give hope and vision to the many children of Victorian times who were often thought of as expendable, living and working in appalling conditions

Mrs Alexander was a woman of her age and social background. Although the words and sentiments may seem rather strange to our ears, she was a pioneer in the Sunday school movement, writing a large number children hymns as an attempt to teach the Christian faith in words that could be understood.

Once in Royal will be listened to by many again this Christmas and we, like those who first heard it, will picture once again the image of the nativity and receive the reassurance that God is with us.

Gail.

(Information taken from *Bethlehem Carols*. By Lucy Moore & Martyn Payne with BibleLands)

Advent 2- Pause for thought and prayer: Immanuel – God with us

The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)



When the future is uncertain and tomorrows a dark curtain - Immanuel.
When words wound like a sword & anger rises to a roar - Immanuel
When a bud become a flower, every second every hour - Immanuel
When community surrounds & the cry for rights & justice mounts – Immanuel
God with us that Christmas day as Jesus in the manger lay - Immanuel
God with us now this Christmas too & for everyday that we live through – Immanuel. (Poem by Hilary Jane Hughes)

We pray together: Lord Jesus, You loved and love; the unlovely, the outcast, the marginalised. May we always do the same, showing our love with kind words and practical actions, not just at Christmas but throughout each day of the year. **AMEN.**

Worship for Sunday 6th December.

Our worship material from “Twelvebaskets” follows after these notices.

Living Advent Calendar.

Our Living Advent Calendar window will be switched on this Saturday, 5th December. All around Dore people are decorating their windows and the trail will continue with new addresses added until Christmas Eve. The dates and addresses until 11th December are as follows:

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| 1st | 28, Bushey Wood Road. | 2nd | The Village Greens. |
| 3rd | Dore Co-op, Devonshire Terrace Rd. | 4th | Dore Optician, Townhead Rd & Dore Dental Care |
| 5th | Dore Methodist Church. | 6th | Devonshire Arms, High Street |
| 7th | 17, Chatsworth Road & 11 The Meadway | 8th | 10, Vernon Rd & 4 Meadway Drive |
| 9th | 11, Leyfield Rd & 19 Chatsworth Rd | 10th | Dore Old School user groups |
| 11th | 53 Devonshire Rd & 63 Furness Ave | | |

Carols on the Doorstep.

Join with your neighbours in a national celebration on Sunday 20th December at 5-30 p.m. singing carols. This is being organised by Premier Radio and the Newcastle Methodist District. More information will be available shortly.

Pastoral Letter from Gail.

By now everyone should have received the December Pastoral Letter from Gail. This outlines our plans (subject to Covid restrictions remaining as they are), for limited acts of worship in our building. If anyone has not received the letter, wants further information or, most importantly, wants to book a seat at any of the services, please contact the Bailey's.

**Please send any items for our "Weekly Update" to the Baileys by TUESDAY evening.
Telephone: 235 1085. Email: john.bailey23a@btinternet.com**

6th December 2020 - The Vine at Home - The Big Church Sing at Home Second Sunday in Advent.

Call to worship

Advent God, come amongst us.
God of hope, shine your light upon us,
Flickering, like a candle flame,
Advent God, we put our hope in you.

Amen.¹

Hymn: 212 StF – O come, all ye faithful

1 O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him,
born the King of angels:
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

2 True God of true God,
Light of Light eternal,
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father,
begotten, not created:

3 See how the shepherds,
summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
we too will thither
bend our joyful footsteps:

4 Lo, star-led chieftains,
Magi, Christ adoring,
offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;
we to the Christ-child
bring our hearts' oblations:

5 Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
'Glory to God
in the highest:'

Latin, 18th century, possibly by John Francis Wade
(c. 1711-1786) and others
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words
Edition, number 212. CCLI 554990

Opening Prayers

Holy God,
Quieten our minds from their ceaseless chatter,
Still us now as you calmed the storm...

¹ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

[Pause]

We come before you today in awe and wonder
Knowing our words can never be enough,
but aware that they will be acceptable in your sight.

[Pause]

We approach you with thankful hearts
for reminding us that you are coming,
that we are not forgotten...
that despite the worst we can throw at you,
you still come.

[Pause]

Our penalty is paid.
Straighten our highways,
raise up our valleys,
and make our rough places smooth.

[Pause]

Help us to prepare a place for you...
in our hearts, in our street,
in our school, in our workplace,
in our nation, in our world. **Amen.**²

We say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11 - God's People Are Comforted

40 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. **2** Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. **4** Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

5 Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

6 A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. **7** The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

8 The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings;^[a] lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,^[b] lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

10 See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. **11** He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.³

² Opening prayers written by Phil Craine

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Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

1 Lord, you were favourable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin.

8 Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.^[a] 9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. 10 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. 11 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. 12 The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. 13 Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.⁴

Mark 1:1-8 The Proclamation of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the good news^[a] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.^[b]

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,^[c] “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,^[d] who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”

4 John the baptizer appeared^[e] in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with^[f] water; but he will baptize you with^[g] the Holy Spirit.”⁵

Reflections on the readings

Much like many of us might be at this time of year, this week’s readings are full of anticipation. Each passage feels like it’s teetering on the edge of a big arrival, anticipating a change to come. But, perhaps frustratingly, each passage leaves us just short. We are left waiting for the ‘big moment’ to arrive.

For many, this is the feeling we place ourselves in each year as we arrive at advent. A time of awaiting. This anticipation can be hard. Sometimes, instead of being able to fix our eyes on the change to come, we can get lost in the waiting. Anticipation without a sense of the destination is an anxious feeling.

But, as this week’s passages encounter this same anticipation, they offer with it a reminder of the goal on which we fix our eyes.

Each passage talks about the arrival of God’s kingdom. Isaiah 40 hears a voice say ‘prepare a way for the Lord’, and Psalm 85 believes that the Lord will ‘give what is good’. In 1 Mark, we meet John the Baptist, a messenger tasked with going before Jesus, calling on people to anticipate his arrival.

In each of these circumstances, the writer speaks of what it looks like when God arrives. They paint a picture of the Kingdom of God that they are waiting for. What does this Kingdom look like?

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In Isaiah 40, each challenge on the unstable path ahead is dealt with as it needs to be: 'every valley shall be raised up, every mountain shall be made low, the rough ground shall become level, and the rugged places a plain'.

In Psalm 85, we read that when God dwells in the land, righteousness is at the centre. That instead of instability, 'steadfast love and faithfulness will meet'. As a consequence, goodness will come, and the land will produce more and more. This is a picture of a world set right with itself, and abundance blooming as a consequence.

And, in Isaiah we read both at the beginning and end of the passage that all of this will be held in comfort. That God will meet us tenderly, and lead us gently towards this coming Kingdom. All of this is a picture of hope – that the land in which we dwell might be met and transformed by God into a land where in peace, love, faithfulness and righteousness might be at the forefront.

This advent, we might be finding it hard to anticipate a world that looks like this. After a year of so many changes, of fear and worry, it might feel as if we have become untethered from this hopeful vision of God's kingdom come. As we head into 2021, how might we anticipate this 'good news' for the world we live in?

Once again, we can look to the passages to explore this. In each of these passages, as people wait for the coming Kingdom they're anticipating, they do so not passively but actively. In each, they are living out and declaring the good news upon which they are fixing their eyes.

In Isaiah, the writer invites the bearer of 'good news' to 'go up on a high mountain' and 'lift up your voice with a shout!' Those who see the vision of God's kingdom come are invited to make it known to everyone, that the 'glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together'. They are called to have a prophetic voice, to speak God's Good News to others.

Finally, in Mark 1, John the Baptist declares the Good News in his actions. He goes before Jesus, baptising people with water and declaring that soon, one will come who will offer so much more.

In each of these ways, we are shown how to live in Holy anticipation. To wait for the coming of God's Kingdom not anxiously, but by actively seeking to fix our eyes on the Good News God offers us.

How might we, as the Church, seek to live in Holy anticipation this Christmas? In today's world, where the future is uncertain, Isaiah 40 and Psalm 85 offer a vision of things set right that is Good News in uncertainty. And, churches around the country have been offering this vision to those around them practically. As churches have engaged in mutual aid, food provision, mental health support, provision for those who are homeless, they have helped people to see a reality of faithfulness and love. As the Methodist Church, together with others, has called on the Government to 'Reset The Debt' of those trapped by Covid-19 related household debt, we have offered a picture of a different reality, where each challenge is met with the response it needs, and all things are set right for all people.

By declaring the good news, living differently and acting for change, we are called to fix our own eyes on God's Kingdom. And, in doing so, we might be able to offer this vision to others, offering hope in anticipation this advent. **Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Leader: Gracious God,

Response: **Speak peace to us today.**

God, You have been favourable to your people
In your grace pardoning us for the times we have neglected you,
Ourselves and one another.

In your endless love for us you have promised to speak peace over us,
That we might turn to you in our hearts and seek to be faithful.

Gracious God,

Speak peace to us today.

In your Kingdom, steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
Righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

As you seek to set all things right,
Might we seek to fix our eyes on this vision of your Kingdom,
Trusting in your promise that you will give all people what is good.

Gracious God,

Speak peace to us today.

God, Sometimes we struggle to see your vision for the world.

In the midst of change and challenge,
It can be hard to see where you are working for our good.

During this advent season,
Might we come together as a community
To support one another to catch glimpses of your kingdom,
That our faithfulness might spring up from the ground in abundance.

Gracious God,

Speak peace to us today.

God, We pray for those for whom the waiting is too hard.
For so many, poverty, debt and hardship has made this year unbearable.
For those families unsupported by our social care system.

For those whose mental health makes it hard for to see your goodness.

For those who need a reminder of your steadfast love and faithfulness.

May your righteousness go before them,
Making a path for their steps so they will not stumble.

Gracious God,

Speak peace to us today.

God, May we hear your voice of peace,
And know that in your kingdom is abundance of life for all. **Amen.**⁶

⁶ Prayers of intercession written by Hannah Brown from the Joint Public Issues Team
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Hymn: 177 StF: Lo, he comes with clouds descending.

- 1 Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia!
God appears on earth to reign.
- 2 Every eye shall now behold him
robed in glorious majesty;
we who set at nought and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.
- 3 Those dear tokens of his passion
still his dazzling body bears;
cause of endless exultation
to his ransomed worshippers:
with what rapture
gaze we on those glorious scars.
- 4 Sing, amen, let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own:
come, Lord Jesus!
Everlasting God, come down!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 177

Blessing

We go from this moment, into a week of many moments. Hoping for an encounter with your grace, with your Spirit. Come amongst us, Advent God, **Amen.**⁷

More information on the "Reset the Debt" report is available at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/reset-the-debt].

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker