



Dore Methodist Church

Weekly Update

11th December 2020.



Message from Gail.

Carols unpacked: While shepherds watched their flock by night.

This popular carol is part of the post reformation tradition and has been sung to over 100 different melodies. The British favourite version is “Winchester Old” and first appeared in Este’s Psalter of 1592. Another popular melody is called “Cranbook,” developed from the folk song “On Ilkley Moor baht ‘at.” I experienced the popularity of this tune for myself when we lived in North Yorkshire.

The words, like many of these traditional carols, have become well known, and even those who don’t go to church often remember the parody about “washing socks!” Almost the whole carol is caught up with the angel’s appearance and their words to the shepherds on the Judean hillside. In fact, one of the Carol’s alternative titles is, “the vision of the shepherds,” and just like them, we too are caught up in the wonder of this event.

When we look at the words however, the 18th century language may seem a little strange for our 21st century world, after all what is a seraph and a shining throng? And the phrase “mighty dread” is not very endearing. However, in the context of the Carol, these words help to capture a real sense of the awesome nature of this event, and corresponds to what we read in Luke 2:8-14. Here Luke describes the third of four angel visits which he records in his Christmas account. By intertwining the Gospel narrative, with the words of the carol, the writer, Nahum Tate, skilfully captures this unique moment in history which the incarnation represents. It highlights the spiritual collision of temporal and eternal, as the veil between heaven and earth is pulled back and God’s messengers pass through.

Overall this is a song of good news, the shepherds come face to face with the good shepherd, who will one day lay down his life for the sheep; and the last verse brings a resounding climax with the angels message of peace to the whole world.

Gail.

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

Advent 3 Pause for thought: ADVENT TO BIRTH

He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "yes I am coming soon." Amen. "Come Lord Jesus come." Revelation 22:20



'Maranatha, come Lord Jesus!' Have you ever heard the phrase, 'Be careful what you wish for!?' 'Come, Lord Jesus', are we ready for that? Are we ready for this controversial lifestyle, where the first shall be last and the last first? Where all sorts of undesirables are given equal shares and rights? Where migrants, refugees, vulnerable and homeless are put on a level with polite society? Where ambition, pride, love of power, is not the prime motive, but God's work is? Jesus turns the world upside down with His words, actions and ultimate sacrifice. Love, grace, compassion, equality, forgiveness, selflessness.

Have you ever heard the phrase, 'Wish what you care for'? Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, as Advent advances into birth. (Meditation by Sue Whalley)

We pray together: *Come lord Jesus come:* We pray for peace, not a peace as the world knows it, but a peaceful heart that comes from knowing Christ as our Lord and Saviour. **AMEN**

Worship for Sunday.

Worship material for next Sunday, 13th December, follows after these notices. As usual it has been prepared for us by "Twelvebaskets".

Services in church.

Everyone should have received a copy of Gail's Pastoral letter, which outlined the services that we are hoping to hold in church, during December and January. These are as follows:

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Wednesday 16 th December at 11-00 a.m. | - | Advent Communion |
| Sunday 20 th December at 10-30 a.m. | - | Christmas Celebration |
| Sunday 20 th December at 2-30 p.m. | - | Christmas Celebration |
| Friday 25 th December at 10-30 a.m. | - | Christmas Morning Worship |
| Sunday January 10 th at 10-30 a.m. | | Covenant Service |
| Sunday January 24 th at 10-30 a.m. | - | Morning Worship |

Owing to the current Coronavirus restrictions it is necessary for everyone wishing to attend any of these services to book in advance. To do this just contact the Bailey's – details shown at the end of these notices.

Grace Food Bank.

Thanks to everyone for a tremendous collection for the Food Bank Christmas Wishlist, and thanks to everyone who has supported the foodbank collections throughout the year.

The next collection will be **Monday, December 14th**. This will be last collection for 2020. The first collection of 2021 will be Monday 4th January.

If you would like me to collect from you please phone me on 0114 473 1998 (or email me at peter.ann.smith@gmail.com) and then leave a bag outside your front door for collection by 9 a.m. on Monday 14th December.

Although food donations are important and very much appreciated please do not put yourselves at risk of contracting COVID-19 by shopping for the Food Bank. Stay safe.

Thanks

Peter

Christmas Greetings.

Kath Marshall sends greetings and wishes everyone a safe and peaceful Christmas. Instead of sending cards she is making a donation to Christian Aid.

Soul Roots Autumn Update.

ZOOM.

We have continued to meet with the young people on Zoom over the Autumn months with a committed number of young people attending all the sessions.

SUNDAY NIGHT – ROOTS & WINGS.

In our Wings group we have been delving deeper into scripture together and learning different tools to help us read the bible and apply it to our everyday lives, particularly in these tough times.

In Roots we have been exploring different issues – social media, mental health, suffering – that affect our everyday lives and seeing what the bible has to say about them and how God can help us through this tough season. We have also explored current and seasonal topical events such as Youth Mental Health Awareness Day, International Peace Day, Halloween and Remembrance Day. In looking at these topics it has allowed us to be more self-aware, more aware of our surroundings and more informed about important events.

TUESDAY NIGHT SKILLS.

We have done a variety of crafts including making poppies, origami, baking, games nights, well-being kits and fitness work outs.

A BIG THANKYOU TO OUR 2019/2020 CHURCHES, TRUSTEES AND VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND PRAYERS.

Living Advent Calendar addresses for the next week.

12th 17, Wyvern Gdns & 1 Durvale Ct	13th 34 Devonshire Rd & 11 Ashfurlong Close
14th 57, Abbeydale Pk Rise & 52 Savage Ln.	15th 14 Saxon Ave & 14 The Meadway
16th 9 The Meadway & 5 Saxon Ave	17th Townhead Farm, Townhead Road
18th 79, Townhead Road.	

WEEKLY UPDATE.

Next weeks will be the last until January 8th 2021. We will provide worship material for Christmas and New Year. **Contributions for next week to the Baileys by Tuesday evening. (Tel 2351085 or email john.bailey23a@btinternet.com)**

PRAYER POINTS

ZOOM SESSIONS – we have been meeting together on ZOOM now for 8 months and it is not ideal. Please pray for a venue to become available for when the time is right and for continued enthusiasm and positivity in the sessions.

MENTAL HEALTH – the young people have school pressures & examinations. Please pray that they do not get too stressed. For their faith in God to grow & for his guidance & protection in this difficult season.

SCHOOLS WORK – Our schools work has been put on hold due to COVID. Please pray that we can rebuild relationships with the young people when the time comes to return to the school. King Ecgberts school have asked us to pray for PEACE, PROTECTION, and POSITIVITY within the school community.

Sunday 13th December – Third Sunday in Advent - The Vine at Home

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: 217 STF – Silent Night

1 Silent night, holy night:
sleeps the world; hid from sight,
Mary and Joseph in stable bare
watch o'er the child beloved and fair
sleeping in heavenly rest.

2 Silent night, holy night:
shepherds first saw the light,
heard resounding clear and long,
far and near, the angel-song:
'Christ the Redeemer is here!'

3 Silent night, holy night:
Son of God, O how bright
love is smiling from your face!
Strikes for us now the hour of grace,
Jesus, Lord at your birth.

Joseph Mohr (1792-1848) translated by Stopford
Augustus Brooke (1832-1916)
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic
Words Edition, number 217 CCLI 554990

Opening Prayers

Gracious God, "Drop Thy still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease..."

[Pause]

"Take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of thy peace."

[Pause]

Take our busyness
Take our excitement
Take our impatience
Take our fears
Take our uncertainties

Take our confessions
and lead us to bring good news to the oppressed;
lead us to where broken hearts need binding;
lead us to where captives can be liberated;
lead us to where mourners yearn to be comforted;
lead us to proclaim the year of your favour. **Amen.**²

Let us now say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 The Good News of Deliverance

61 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;

¹ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Phil Craine

² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing;[^a] I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. **9** Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.³

John 1:6-8, 19-28

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" **20** He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."^[^a] **21** And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." **22** Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" **23** He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. **25** They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah,^[^b] nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" **26** John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, **27** the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." **28** This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.⁴

Reflections on the readings

Today's reflections come from Carolyn Lawrence, the current Vice President of the Methodist Conference.

Well what a year 2020 has been! When we celebrated last New Year's Eve none of us could have envisaged the changes that have happened during this year. If someone had told us back in January that we would soon be wearing masks, unable to sing in church, unable to cuddle our grandchildren and conducting all our services and meetings online we would never have believed

^{3,4} Bible Text is from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved

them! I certainly never expected my year as Vice President to begin with a virtual induction, delivering a speech in an empty room to a camera and then conducting my District Visits on Zoom from my study!

Change is a constant in our lives. Some change is for good and other change can be destructive but like King Canute trying to hold back the tide, we often can't control the changes happening around us and that can be scary.

The lectionary passages for today all speak to us about change and transformation. As we reflect on the story of John the Baptist, preparing the way for the coming of Jesus, we remember that he was pointing to the light that was to come to transform the darkness in people's lives.

During Advent we again remember the promise that God is with us in Jesus and that we are never alone if we invite him to be part of our lives. Today more than ever, the world needs to hear that message of hope that is contained in the story of the incarnation. And as individuals, we too need sometimes to be reminded of the great and comforting truth of the presence of Jesus and his promise never to leave us or forsake us.

From these readings, the one that really resonated with me was the passage from Isaiah 61. Interestingly, in my Bible, this section is titled, 'The Year of the Lord's Favour'. It made me laugh to begin with as I considered the year that has passed, but on further reflection it really struck a chord with me.

This passage, which Jesus used to proclaim the nature of his ministry, speaks powerfully of the transformation that God can bring to individuals and communities. It declares that the poor will hear good news, the broken hearted will be bound up, the captives will be freed, those who mourn will find comfort and be given a crown of beauty in place of ashes, despair will be turned to praise and ancient ruins will be restored and rebuilt.

What a wonderful message of hope to us, especially after the way our world has been rocked this past year.

This year has been tough for us all and I know that many have experienced confusion, disorientation, loss, despair, grief, isolation and discouragement. Many have told me that they feel that they are living in a strange land and it can sometimes seem that we are now living amongst the ashes of our former way of life.

My husband and I were mission partners for a while in Guyana in South America, and before we moved overseas, we had some cross-cultural training. We were taught that moving to a new culture could be like a bereavement process and that it would take time to adjust and adapt to a new way of living with different traditions and expectations. In fact, Psalm 126 was a real comfort to me at that time as we said goodbye to our families and we felt we were like the ones who went out weeping, carrying seed to sow and trusting God to bring good from a difficult season. In fact, I can look back now and see God's hand on our time overseas and also remember the joy as we came home and adapted again to life in the UK.

This past year has been like living through a bereavement in many ways and all of us could have done with some cross cultural training to learn how to adapt to new ways of living and interacting as well as new ways of worshipping and being church.

Whilst walking on the South West Coast Path earlier this year, I came to a part of the cliff that had crumbled away into the sea and the path had had to be diverted further inland. This spoke to me about the current difficulties and I reflected that the path of our lives, which previously seemed

secure, has crumbled away from underneath us and we are having to divert the path as we adjust to new ways of living.

I have been encouraged by hearing many stories of the creative and exciting ways that churches have been finding to enable worship to take place, to care for the vulnerable in their communities and to reach out with the love of Jesus in their villages, towns and cities. Despite the difficulties, and the uncertainties, I truly have seen God bringing beauty from ashes.

My prayer for you today is that you will know the transforming power of God despite difficult circumstances, that you will know the comfort of the presence of God with you and that you will be given the garment of praise in place of a spirit of despair and walk forward in hope, faith and trust, safe in God's hands. **Amen.**⁵

Prayers of intercession

Heavenly Father, Saviour of all people

We pray you would bring comfort to those who are struggling and to those that mourn. We pray that you would bring healing to those suffering. Please give us compassion towards those that are hurting.

[Pause]

Loving Father, our Restorer

We pray that you would fill us with your love, so that we would long to share it and that others would come to know you. Bring transformation in people's hearts so they would have eyes to see and ears to hear what we have to share.

[Pause]

Faithful Father, Promise Keeper

We pray for thankful hearts, where we are able to rejoice and delight in life and in you. Give us the peace that comes only from you so we would be people of contentment. Help us to bring your peace into our families, into our country and into this world.

[Pause]

Father of all creation, our Shepherd,

We pray for our world and for breakthrough. We pray for those that are being persecuted. Help us to stand up for injustice and speak out.

[Pause].

Amen.⁶

⁵ Reflection written by Carolyn Lawrence

⁶ Prayers of intercession written by Alice Young

Hymn: 169 STF – Come thou long expected Jesus

- 1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
- 2 Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.
- 3 Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
- 4 By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 169

Blessing

May the promise and the hope of the Advent season fill our hearts and minds with the true spirit of giving and send us out to live and work for the good of all people. **Amen.**⁷

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⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker