



Heacham Parish Church



***Please note: There is a service in church today at 9.30am.
For details of restrictions see the Notices section of this service.***

Sunday Service 13th December 2020

Peter plays 'Trumpet Fanfare no.1' by Robert Wetzler

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you; **and also with you.**

As we gather in our homes, together yet apart, we meet in the presence of God; the God who is the same, today, yesterday, and tomorrow; the God who is with us today, during this pandemic, this Advent and always; the God who loves us.

Bring your busyness and your worries;
bring your doubts and your desires;
bring your fears and your failures;
bring your hopes and your passions;
bring all that you are to the one who knows you through and through,
and loves you.

Amen.

The third Sunday of Advent : Joy

Every year we light candles as we prepare for the coming of Christ. More and more candles, more and more light; as we watch and wait for Jesus, the Light of the World.

Nehemiah 8:10 says 'The Joy of the Lord is your strength'

We light the first, second, and third candles - the candles of hope and peace and joy.

Song: **Longing for light, we wait in darkness**

sung & played by Hilary, Richard G, Sue, Terry, Karen, Colin, and Rosie

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your Holy people, light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us. Make us your living voice.

Christ, be our light!

Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed.

Christ, be our light!

Prayer of confession:

Heavenly Father,

you call us to prepare for the coming of your Son:

forgive us our unreadiness to receive Him.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus,

you were proclaimed by John the Baptist:

help us also to prepare your way.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Holy Spirit,

you speak through the prophets:

make us attentive to hear your word.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Almighty God,
who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom which cannot be destroyed,
forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth,
strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Song: **Long ago prophets knew**

sung & played by Adrian, Val, Sue, June, Judith, and Christina

Long ago, prophets knew Christ would come, born a Jew.
Come to make all things new; bear his people's burden,
Freely love and pardon.

Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!

Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!

When he comes, when he comes,

Who will make him welcome?

God in time, God in man, this is God's timeless plan:
He will come, as a man, born himself of woman,
God divinely human.

Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!

Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!

When he comes, when he comes,

Who will make him welcome?

Mary, hail! Though afraid; she believed, she obeyed.
In her womb God is laid; till the time expected,
Nurtured and protected.

Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!

Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!

When he comes, when he comes,

Who will make him welcome?

Journey ends! Where afar Bethlem shines, like a star,
Stable door stands ajar. Unborn Son of Mary,
Saviour, do not tarry!

Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!

Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!

When he comes, when he comes,

Who will make him welcome?

Bible Reading: **John 1: 6-8, 19-28** read by Amanda Hughes

A Reflection, from Pip Lawrence

Let us pray: Loving Heavenly Father please open our hearts and minds as we look into your word. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

I really love the opening chapter of John's gospel. It brings me deep joy every time I read it. It prepares us for the layers, depth, and profound nature of the gospel which follows the opening chapter. It is impossible to plum its depths. Even in a lifetime it would not be possible to reach the last layer of knowledge and insight. Mostly we just scratch the surface of its content and meaning.

The reading today proves this description. There is a great deal to ponder, explore, and reveal. Consequently - for our thoughts today we will only pause and ponder on the first verses of the reading. The others we can explore using all the extra time that Covid-19 Tier Two allows!

V6: "There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John". Have you ever stopped and simply been blown away by that statement? If you have, you will know how much this statement conveys a deeply meaningful message about a man called John. The statement is loaded in a way that is not conveyed in the other gospels. Matthew picks up John the Baptist's story stating that he came preaching; giving details of his wardrobe and diet. Luke concentrates, to begin with, on the circumstances surrounding his birth; the emphasis being Elizabeth and Zechariah. As Penny told us last week - Mark possibly gets a bit closer to John's verse by preceding any mention of John the Baptist with quotes from the Old Testament.

John the Baptist was special. Jesus said so. He said: "among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist". So that puts John right up there before even Moses, Elijah, and Samuel. That's how important he was. The reason is found in the next verse - V7: "He (John) came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe".

John the Baptist was the greatest ever warm-up act in history. His mission was to point people to Jesus. The best part about John was that he was not in the game for self glory. He readily admits that he is not Messiah. He is recorded as embracing the call to give way to the light. We see this in the words (John 3: 29b-30): "That joy is mine and is now complete. He must become greater, I must become less".

John did not hold on to the limelight, like some fading celebrity. He gave way. His job was to point to Jesus for a nation to prepare itself; it was a one-time, never-to-be-repeated mission. He bowed out gracefully.

V8: "He himself was not the light, he came only to witness to the light". He was faithful to his mission, never stepping over the boundary of this statement. There were no blurred lines, he was only to bear witness to the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. He said: "A man who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me".

We can learn a great deal from John's witness. We learn that witnessing to the Light of the World, while glorious and enriching, can also be very challenging. John ended his days in prison, in trouble for speaking the truth to those in power. In these increasingly secular days, we all need John's resolve to witness. We witness to the light that shines in the darkness, but as Peter says: "do this with gentleness and respect".

We all know that things did not end well for John. Random events led to his execution. We know that he had doubts in prison, asked Jesus for assurance, and it was given.

It may be that for many of us, in this strange year, things may feel like they are not ending well too, we also may be having doubts. If we are, we have to be honest with Jesus, and others. Why? In order to allow Jesus to answer our doubts, others to lift us in prayer and, if possible, in a more tangible way.

Let us all remember that Christ came into the world to dispel darkness. That He has called us from darkness into His glorious light. As John, the gospel writer, says: "He gave us the right to become children of God".

Children of God - rejoice with me, as we celebrate Christ with us, the One who is able to overcome all of our darkness and doubt, even in a pandemic. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession, led by Richard Gowland

Heavenly Father, Advent is here and we remember that this is a season when we look forward to celebrating the birth of your son, Jesus Christ. May we be inspired by Jesus' message of love and reconciliation. Mary and Joseph rejoiced at Jesus' birth; may the world do the same.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Church and for the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Renew the life and faith of the Church; strengthen our witness; and make us one in Christ. We pray for our leaders - Archbishops Justin and Stephen, Bishops Jonathan and Graham. May they continue to guide us in ways of truth and faith. For our own vicar, Veronica, and the readers at St Mary's. May we faithfully follow their leadership and teaching. Enable us to do what You need in growing the faith community.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for good government. Our government is elected by ordinary people, many with Christian faith or persuasion, who will be praying for them today. May our elected representatives not forget the importance of their task and the need to represent all. Like us they need to turn to You, to embrace Jesus' message to love one another, and to work for the common good. Justice and safety lie only with You.

The government's difficult tasks in handling the pandemic and the Brexit negotiations is stretching their abilities. May they be encouraged in their tasks by the support they receive from the electorate and parliamentary colleagues.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Continue to guide this church family at Heacham. Help us to decide our personal priorities and promote the wellbeing of this community and our Christian life.

There are many appeals active at this time. May we show compassion towards those in need, wherever they come from. Let us not fall into the habit of assuming that someone else will deal with it.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We thank you for the service of our Queen and her family. May they continue to serve the nation and You faithfully. Our Queen is rightly admired for her wisdom and her sense of duty. Thank you for guiding her in all she does and is. Help her through this period of difficulty.

Lord, in your Mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We raise before you now, in a few moments of silence, those known to us who especially need prayer. In illness, bereavement, worry, people who are hurting. Our prayer chain and prayer ministry are active examples and duties for us to observe. May these be used more. May we learn to pray more and to talk to You and listen to You through this prayer.

A Short Silence is held.

Lord, in your Mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Remember the souls of Your servants no longer here on earth with us; and those who are saddened by their passing. Be with the bereaved in their loneliness and give them the faith to look beyond their present troubles to your son Jesus Christ; who died, and rose again, and who lives for evermore. We shall all be reunited in Heaven.

A Short Silence is held.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of Your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

We pray together the Lord's Prayer, led by Terry Clay

Song: **When the Lord in glory comes**

sung & played by Adrian, Val, Sue, June, Judith, and Christina

When the Lord in glory comes,
not the trumpets, not the drums,
not the anthem, not the psalm, not the thunder, not the calm,
not the shout the heavens raise, not the chorus, not the praise,
not the silences sublime, not the sounds of space and time,
but His voice when He appears shall be music to my ears;
but his voice when he appears shall be music to my ears.

When the Lord is seen again,
not the glories of His reign,
not the lightnings through the storm, not the radiance of His form,
not His pomp and power alone, not the splendours of His throne,
not His robe and diadems, not the gold and not the gems,
but His face upon my sight shall be darkness into light;
 but His face upon my sight shall be darkness into light.

When the Lord to human eyes
shall bestride our narrow skies,
not the child of humble birth, not the carpenter of earth,
not the man by all denied, not the victim crucified,
but the God who died to save, but the victor of the grave,
He it is to whom I fall, Jesus Christ, my all in all;
 He it is to whom I fall, Jesus Christ, my all in all.

Blessing

May your heart be at peace and your mind be at rest.
May you be confident in who you are; and share God's gifts of light,
hope, joy, and grace with others.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy
Spirit, be among you and remain with you and those you love always.

Amen

Peter plays 'Choral Song' by S.S. Wesley

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Notices

PLEASE READ, ACTION, DISPLAY THE ENCLOSED CHRISTMAS SERVICES POSTER

In church services – Covid-19 restrictions

Two-metre distancing, hand-sanitising on entry and exit, one-way system, face coverings, contact details for track and trace. Also, as we are in Tier2, worshippers should not mix with anyone not in their own household or 'support bubble'. This is hard because, as a church family, we like to chat and help each other. To minimise the risk of spreading the virus we can only do this outside; socially distanced and applying the 'rule of six'.

Morning Prayer continues Monday-Friday at 9am via Zoom.

Hosted, this week, by different people each day. If you would like to join please contact Veronica for the link at heacham.vicar@gmail.com

Podcast 'Sunday Hope'

The Diocese of Norwich has a weekly audio podcast called 'Sunday Hope'. It is available on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [Overcast](#), and more.

The podcast can also be listened to from any landline telephone: call **01603 537577** (local rate) to hear the latest edition.

Daily Hope offers music, prayers, and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England; at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set-up particularly to help those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions.

Advent Zoom - Saturday 19th December 7pm-8.30pm

In this season we focus on the LIGHT of LIFE coming to this earth. Rosie Ross is hosting a Zoom meeting to enjoy reading God's word together. Do come in expectation of hearing God speak to us, remembering that "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ".

Romans 10 v.17

We will share together in reading God's word about LIGHT from both Old and New Testaments. Including a special focus on STARS in the Bible.

We will close with a short time of prayer and worship.

If you would like to join this meeting, please send an email to rosses@013net.net to receive a link the day before.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2020 (here is our entry in the Village newsletter for December, so you know what is planned; with added notes in italics).

LIGHT UP HEACHAM with STARS

After last year's great angel festival, we would like to encourage everyone to make and/or display stars in your windows, on your fences, in your trees, in your garden, wherever you can - for all to see. **Lighting up Heacham with Stars**, to bring some joy and light in this dark time, so we can walk around the village spotting stars from mid-December onwards. In the Christmas story it was the star that the wise men



followed to find Jesus...maybe you could follow the stars around the village and see where you can find Jesus?

We are decorating the church with stars too, so if you want to make/lend a star for church could you let Liz know please (tel. 571662). The 2 schools have also made some for us to display. Please do put stars in your windows, etc. and, if you can, also a nativity scene with Jesus in it... if you want a printed picture of a nativity, ask and we can print one in the office.

Prayer and Remembering

At present the church building is open on **Wednesdays from 10-12 and Saturdays from 2-4** for private prayer and reflection. You can light a candle, sit and pray in the quiet, and enjoy the peace of the church

building. You will find a Christmas tree in church on which you can hang a Star with a prayer, or the name of someone you wish to remember. There is also, in the church porch, a festive display and prayer board; so even when the church is not open, you can come into the porch to write a prayer or remember someone.

Churchyard

The churchyard is always open for you to walk in. A nativity scene is on display... and NOW a star on the top of the tower!

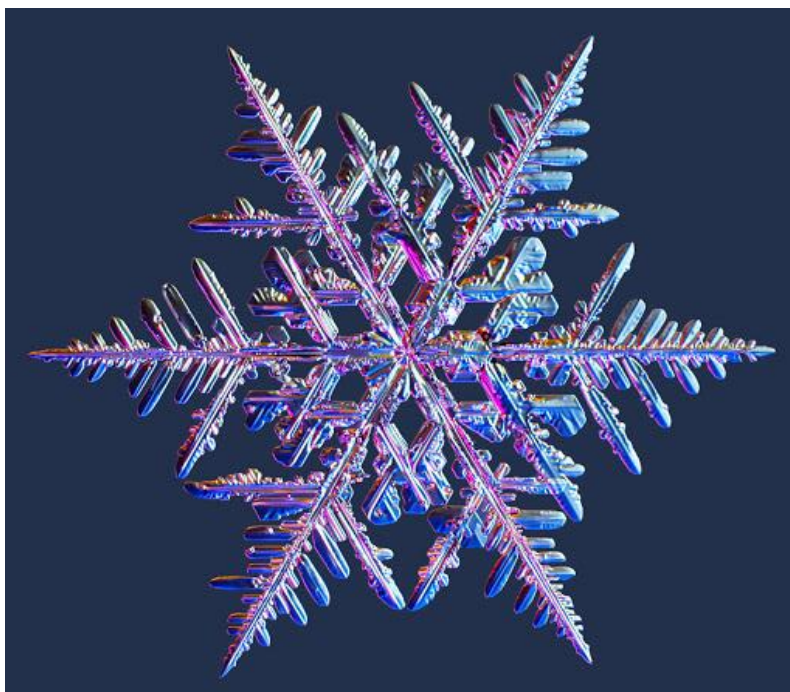
Advent and Christmas ideas & resources from the Diocese -

Reflections for Advent and Christmas, by Susanna Gunner, available at <https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/resource/advent-reflections/>

If you would like paper copies of these please leave a message on our Church Office answerphone: 01485 572539.

Digital Advent Calendar - Twenty-six varied contributors from across our Diocese (a shepherd, a teacher, a prison chaplain, for example) offer us something to ponder each day, starting with an image or a poem or some music. Each door uncovers something rich to turn over prayerfully throughout the day in question. Sign up to have each day's offering sent to your email inbox <http://eepurl.com/hiEuQv> You can also access the calendar via all the Diocesan social media channels.

For those not already signed up – DO IT. No chocolates, of course, but each day thus far has been well worth opening - very unusual and thought-provoking.



As we ponder what a strange year this has been
and concern ourselves with celebrating the birth of our Saviour
in a safe way

