



Christmas Eve

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill
24th December 2022 from 11:30pm

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP – TOM

LIGHTING THE FOUR ADVENT CANDLES

Now is the time to light the Advent Candles. This past Sunday was the final Sunday of Advent, and we lit four purple candles, following a theme entitled God's incredible plan. We reflected briefly on the Prophets, Place, Politics and the People (4 P's) God used to achieve his plan. Tonight, Christmas Eve, we'll light the white candle, the Christ candle, which symbolizes the Light – along with the hope, love, joy, and peace – that Christ brought into this world.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Almighty God, we thank you for the birth of the Christ child in Bethlehem, as announced by the angels on this holy night. May the mystery of the Word made flesh fill our souls with wonder and yearning. Change our hearts from a busy inn to a quiet chamber for your glory. May we who are gathered here join in song with the angels, share the delight of the shepherds, and adore him with the wise men. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR CHRISTMAS EVE AND LORD PRAYER ©Jan Berr

We praise you, God of wonder and mystery. We praise you in the excitement of anticipation, in the heartache of our longing, and the fulfilment of our dreams. We praise you that in this moment you step into our humanity meeting our expectation and anticipation with the promise of Emmanuel, God with us; fulfilling our longing and our dreams with your glory dwelling amongst us We praise you that you Word is made flesh in the birth pains of a mother in the protective fear of a father, in the cries of a new-born baby.

CAROL 1: LONG TIME AGO IN BETHLEHEM

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iRzz3YrukY>

POEM: FOLLOW THE STAR by Graeme Dutton

Written in the stars
A love letter to us all
This year, more than ever
We need to heed the call

Searching for the light
We will not be alone
Gathered in front of screens,

Pages or on the phone

This year will be different
But the journey's still the same
Following the star
Listening for his name

Pathways in the desert
Shepherds watch by night
Angels proclamations
Of that coming Advent light

Please, will you follow?
Join us in our song?
The glorious day is coming
Christmas won't be long

READING – LUKE 2:13-20(NIV)

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.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CAROL 2: THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80Du61ta-AU&t=10s>

ARE WE THERE YET? © Paul Rand

Donkey: Are we there yet? My back is killing me. I thought I'd just be carrying the luggage but then every now and then, she gets on as well. And she's 9 months pregnant! I don't know what they think they're doing, travelling all this way with her in the condition she's in. I am trying my best to make it as comfortable a ride as possible for her but each time we only go a little way and she says, "I can't go any further like this. I think I'll get off and walk again, for a while."

So then we have to stop again, and he helps her off and the bags go all wonky so he has to fiddle around with the straps and he pulls them far too tight. So, we go a little further and then she gets tired and he says "don't you think you'd be better off on the donkey, love." If we didn't have to keep on stopping, we'd be there by now. There just better be a good stable for me to rest in when we get there.

Mary: Is he here yet? All the way to Bethlehem it felt like he'd be starting his journey at any minute. It's not exactly where I'd hoped to have my first baby, here in this stable. But

at least we're off the road. That poor donkey, I hope she gets some rest tonight. I'm not sure I will. I think he's nearly here.

Angel: Are we all here yet? Right, as soon as everyone's in position, we can turn on the and scare those shepherds witless. I mean, give them the wonderful news! He's arrived! He's here! Go and find him! Joy to the world! Are we all ready then? Hello good shepherds, don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy for all God's people.

Shepherd: I am sure we can't be there yet. I know the angel said we'd find him in a manger. But surely not in this part of town. God wouldn't choose here for the saviour of all the world to be born. But then I didn't think he'd choose us to be the first to hear about it. Maybe this is where we'll find him.

Wisemen: I've just realised we're not there yet. We were so sure that this is where the King of kings would have to be born that we didn't study the texts closely enough. Not in the palace in Jerusalem. But in the little town of Bethlehem. We will get there. Eventually.

CAROL 3: O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sI7_TGZaOIE

STRANGE, THE WAYS THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN © Andrew Pratt

Strange, the ways that God has chosen,
strange the people of God's choice.
Quietly we rehearse the memory,
midnight turns and we rejoice.

Light is coming to the stable.
Joy is coming to the earth.
Joseph watches, thinking quietly.
Mary moving, giving birth.

God is being born among us,
not remote but very near.
All the heavens join in chorus,
love has come to cast out fear.

(4 minutes to midnight)

CAROL 4: SILENT NIGHT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obF2V72Kx1Y>

----- **MIDNIGHT** -----

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

After all the waiting
And watching for the signs
All the anticipation and excitement
This is the moment
Immanuel - God is with us.

CAROL 5: JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LIGHT IS COME

VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kqi8aphPtNQ>

BRIEF REFLECTION

Christmas trees and Christmas wrappings
Christmas turkey, Christmas cake
Christmas plays and Christmas puddings
Christmas cards and crafts to make
Christmas lights and Christmas shopping
In early October, oh for goodness sake
Christmas songs and Christmas stockings
Decorations, mince pies to bake
Christmas carols and Christmas crackers
Christmas parties and so many sweets to take
Christmas TV with many repeats

All the family fighting for the best seats
But what's this all about this word that describes so many things
Is it really about spending, parties and all that Santa brings
Well the fun is good and we really enjoy all that festivity
But at the heart of this season is a real life nativity
Not the wonderful tea towel shepherds and angels brigade
But that love was really born and in a manger laid
In Jesus we see God on this earth

Accepting all people and showing them their self worth
Not the stained glass version we so often see
But a babe who grew and died for you and me
He came not in riches in a designer made cot
His true identity was no doubt difficult to spot
The Christmas card picture would be missing somehow
If you saw the scene you may not say 'oh wow'
He was held by a peasant girl with a man at her side

Their excitement and joy they no doubt could not hide
Joseph and Mary, no doubt not X factor material
There was nothing in the scene that was remotely imperial
Then the shepherds arrived such a motley crew
To be fair they realised God was doing something new
They had been told by an angel to go to this place
To see the author of creation in a baby's face

The town was so busy there was a lot going on
It would seem most people missed the arrival of God's Son
They didn't miss it through malice or watching TV
There was no Sky Sports or BBC

They simply missed it – the good news being born
They were unaware what was happening on that first Christmas morn
I guess it's easy to miss the point of the season
But make no mistake that behind Christmas there is a God given reason.

CAROL 6: O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9KBLAPMI2Q>

WISHING ONE ANOTHER A MERRY CHRISTMAS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vdXR_igALU

BENEDICTION

The Prince of Peace
Peace in a baby who lies in a manger.
Peace through the parents who welcome each stranger.
Peace, though a child is in imminent danger.
Peace from the Prince of Peace.

Peace for the shepherds who ran down to greet him.
Peace for the Magi, come, star-led, to meet him.
Peace for the soldiers sent out to defeat him.
Peace from the Prince of Peace.

Peace was his gift to disciples in sorrow.
Peace is that gift none can beg, steal, or borrow.
Peace for today and new hope for tomorrow.
Peace from the Prince of Peace.