

Act of worship – Sunday, Dec 27th, 2020

Conducted by Kate Hunt



Welcome It is a joy to be with on this first Sunday after Christmas.

Let us come together to worship with these words of prayers for each candle of the Advent ring

In our looking into 2021,

may the God of hope be with us.

In our lamenting the losses of 2020,

may the God of peace be with us.

In our celebrations of Christmas,

may the God of joy be with us.

In our caring for the world,

may the God of love be with us.

In our living of life in all its fullness,

may we know that God is with us. Amen.

Gathering Let us worship God with this joyful Carol.

Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord is come

Let earth receive her King

Let every heart prepare Him room

And Heaven and nature sing

And Heaven and nature sing

And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

Joy to the World, the Saviour reigns!

Let all their songs employ;

While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,

And makes the nations prove

The glories of His righteousness,

And wonders of His love,

And wonders of His love,

And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Let us pray

When the days are short, and daylight is fleeting,

When the wind is sharp, and rain drives obliquely...

Creator of light and Banisher of darkness,

You join us, shining brightly among us...

as a human being... Jesus Christ.

We are filled with awe as we gather

to worship you this Christmas.

Where we have neglected those whom we love,

Where we have ignored the cries of people in pain,

Where we have decided to settle for comfort rather than address the true needs of our life and our age, all the while knowing darkness has encroached, Forgive us we pray...

Silence

...remind us of Your light,

bathe us in it...

remind us that it removes the darkness...

and yet more...

...that it challenges us to rise to our given potential which comes from You.

May we, through our faithful discipleship,

reflect Your light onto others

and so, reflect Your loving care for the world.

Creator of light,

Banisher of darkness,

Light of the World,

hear our prayer. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Reading Isaiah 61:10-62:3 NRSV

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.

The Vindication and Salvation of Zion

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,

and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,

until her vindication shines out like the dawn,

and her salvation like a burning torch.

2 The nations shall see your vindication,

and all the kings your glory;

and you shall be called by a new name

that the mouth of the Lord will give.

3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,

and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Thought – Change

This reading starts our theme of change. Our beings are described as becoming places of exultation, joy, exuberance, delight in God. We will have new clothes that show God's saving love and robes of justice.

We will wear new jewels and garlands. New shoots will be springing from the earth and gardens will be transformed

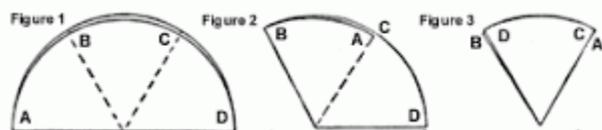
I'm sure over Christmas we have seen much change. Beautifully wrapped parcels converted into toys or chocolates and a heap of wrappings. Individual bewildering jigsaw pieces becoming unbelievable pictures. Delicious ingredients transformed into scrumptious delights. Which in turn become empty plates and piles of washing up.

Over this last year there has been so much change, so much difficulty, so much sadness, so much newness, so much determination, so much creativity.

If we return to this reading, we hear that as we take each step alongside God, through the changes around us, our glory shall shine out and the Lord will give us each a new name. We shall be a crown of beauty and in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem, now and for ever.

So, for a few minutes let this sink in. Imagine the beauty of snowflakes growing. Imagine the amazing changes God has and will make in us.

Perhaps you might like to take a circle of white paper. Fold it in half and then into sixths.



Then cut shapes out of the edges - being careful not to cut all the way down the edge. Open up and see the change that has come about - your very own snowflake.



Snowflake Video <https://vimeo.com/87342468>

Hymn - Like a Candle Flame

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teZaQUKjx24&ab_channel=GrahamKendrickMusic

Like a candle flame

Flickering small in our darkness

Uncreated light

Shines through infant eyes

God is with us, alleluia

God is with us, alleluia

Come to save us, alleluia

Come to save us

Alleluia!

Stars and angels sing

Yet the earth sleeps in shadows

Can this tiny spark

Set a world on fire?

Refrain

Yet his light shall shine

From our lives, Spirit blazing

As we touch the flame

Of his holy fire

Refrain

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Reading 2 - Luke 2:22-40 NRSV

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

²² When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; ^[a] this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ^[b] ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon ^[c] came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon ^[d] took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ "Master, now you are dismissing your servant ^[e] in peace,

according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

³³ And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon ^[f] blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna ^[g] the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child ^[h] to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

³⁹ When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Reflection We began with change. Now we hear of the changes brought by the tiny baby Jesus as he is brought into the Temple to be presented, as is the Jewish custom.

We hear that Simeon is changed by the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. He is changed by

holding this child and he praises God, revealing that in this scrap of humanity - God is securing our future and bringing light for everyone. But this will not be easy. We hear that Anna is changed, as her endless days of dedication are rewarded by seeing this child and shares the changed possibilities this child brings.

Neither Simeon or Anna are young. We are clearly shown the importance of their age, their experience, their year in year out dedication. We are reminded of the value of all our generations - the experienced, the new and fresh, the in the middle of it, the weary and worn, those with time, those who can show us the way whether old or young.

We need each other in worshipping, working, serving, grieving, caring, loving. God has put us in community, to support, encourage, delight, surprise, and challenge, through whatever changes life throws at us, as we step out into this New Year, with God in the middle of us all. God our creator, our redeemer, our inspiration.

Let's share together the words of the song, 'Lean on me'. My boys used to sing this in their school choir.

This version on YouTube -

<https://www.openculture.com/2020/04/musicians-around-the-world-play-lean-on-me-the-uplifting-song-by-bill-withers-rip.html> reminds us of the essential

value of each and every one in our community, on our doorstep, in our nation and across the world.

Lean on me

Sometimes in our lives

We all have pain, we all have sorrow.

But if we are wise,

We know that there's always tomorrow.

Lean on me when you're not strong

And I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on

For it won't be long

'Til I'm gonna need somebody to lean on.

©Bill Withers

Let us pray

God with us,

You know Your world,

and we open our hearts and minds to You,
sharing our concerns

and listening to Your concerns and Your calls to act.

With a baby laid in a manger,
we pray for all mothers and babies
and those who support them...

With a father learning a new role,
we pray for all at new beginnings
and living with uncertainty...

With Simeon and Anna,
we pray for all who wait
in hope or fear, for life or death...

With seekers and worshippers,
we pray for Your Spirit to work
in hearts, minds and faith communities...

With those who speak up,
we pray for Your will to be done
and Your kingdom to come on earth...

With those in poverty,
we pray for transformation of systems
and an end to exploitation...

With all of creation,
we pray for climate justice
and an awakening to our responsibilities...

God with us,
send Your Spirit to transform and guide us,
and so, to change Your world in Your ways. **Amen**

Hymn - Angels from the Realms of Glory

Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight through all the earth;
heralds of creation's story
now proclaim Messiah's birth!

Come and worship

Christ, the new-born king;

come and worship,

worship Christ the new-born king.

2 Shepherds in the fields abiding,
watching by your flocks at night,
God with us is now residing:
see, there shines the infant light!

Refrain

3 Wise men leave your contemplations!
brighter visions shine afar;
seek in him the hope of nations,
you have seen his rising star:

Refrain

4 Though an infant now we view him,
he will share his Father's throne,
gather all the nations to him;
every knee shall then bow down:

Refrain

James Montgomery (1771 - 1854)

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Blessing

May we go on,
ready to see God at work in the world,
open to hope for God's ways in the world,
and holding God's love in our lives.

And the blessing of God,
loving Creator, new-born Son, and living Spirit,
go with us, and to all those we are given to love,
this day, into 2021, and always, **Amen.**

Prayers adapted from Church of Scotland Worship Materials.