

## HOW Mission Community & KSAT Worship Service for 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020

**Theme:** The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out.

**Call to worship:** I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'. And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God; that shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way'.

**Hymn MP 393 – Joy to the world**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AolsRxT-YQQ>

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! Your sweetest 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

**Prayer.** Loving God, thank you for this Christmas season when we remember especially the coming of Your Son Jesus to our earth as a tiny human baby.

Thank you for all Jesus' coming meant to the life of our world – how much He was able to teach us about Your love for us, and the way in which You want us to get the very best out of our lives. Thank you for His death making it possible for the wrong things we do to be forgiven, for the putting right of the very special relationship, between us and You. Thank you for Christmas –but also for all You give to us throughout the year not just at this time.

Thank you for Your presence with us in the difficult year which is just finishing-for the good times made richer by Your presence; for the difficult times made easier because of Your strength, Your love and the prayers and support of others.

We come to say thank you and we also come to say sorry. Sorry for those times when we have said or thought or done things we wish now we hadn't done; and not done those things we wish we had done. Thank you that You understand. Forgive all we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be. All these prayers, and the unspoken prayers of each of our hearts, we ask in the name of Jesus our Saviour and our Lord. **Amen**

**Lord's prayer.**

## Reading: *John 1 v 1-14*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The True Light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

## Hymn MP 266 I cannot tell why he whom angels worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62wk5KvI7-w>

I cannot tell, why He whom angels' worship, should set His love upon the sons of men,  
Or why as Shepherd, He should seek the wanderers, to bring them back, they know not  
how or when.

But this I know, that He was born of Mary, when Bethlem's manger was His only home,  
And that He lived at Nazareth and laboured, and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world is  
come.

I cannot tell how silently He suffered, as with His peace He graced this place of tears,  
Or how His heart upon the cross was broken, the crown of pain to three and thirty years.  
But this I know He heals the broken-hearted, and stays our sin and calms our lurking  
fear,  
And lifts the burden from the heavy-laden, for yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world is  
here.

I cannot tell how He will win the nations, how He will claim His earthly heritage,  
How satisfy the needs and aspirations of east and west, of sinner and of sage.  
But this I know all flesh shall see His glory, and He shall reap the harvest He has sown,  
And some glad day His sun will shine in splendour, when He the Saviour, Saviour of the  
world is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship, when at His bidding every storm is stilled,  
Or who can say how great the jubilation when all the hearts of men with love are filled.  
But this I know the skies will fill with rapture, and myriad, myriad human voices sing,  
And earth to heaven and heaven to earth will answer: At last the Saviour, Saviour of the  
world, is King

## **Reading: Luke 2 v 22-40**

*When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about Him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, His mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them, at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.*

## **Reflection**

I have always been glad that I live in a part of the world where Christmas comes in the winter. Those words from John's gospel take on so much more meaning; the Christmas lights in our towns and villages and in our homes are so much more uplifting in the dark days of December. So as I reflected /prayed about the two Bible passages in our service today and the service timing between Christmas and new year; I was reminded of our calling, included in the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, our calling to be light to those around us.

In the darkness of the fear, uncertainty, illness, death, financial problems and so many other challenges, which have been caused this year by Covid, and not helped by other issues, like Brexit and lack of affordable housing; thankfully there have also been many situations, many people, who have brought light to the dark places. We have missed, and rightly so, our various carol services – a time of year when many people from the wider community come to join us; but thankfully there has also been time, technical expertise and a willingness to do lots of different things, which have brought the message outside the church and into the community. Then as individuals, we have both been able to be a light to others by our words and actions, and in return received light from others.

However, it's still been a hard year in all sorts of ways and perhaps this year more than other years it's not always been easy to share our light. Simeon and Anna whose story we read in our second reading give us an example to follow. First of their patience and perseverance – Simeon was described by Luke as someone who watched and waited for the restoration of Israel, while Anna, Luke records, worshipped day and night with fasting and with prayer. Then their hope – it has been revealed to Simeon that he would not see death until, he had seen the Lord's Messiah; while Anna seeing the young parents and their baby gave thanks to God and talked about the child to all who were looking for the liberation of Jerusalem. It may feel that our own light is very small and insignificant in a time of much darkness but remember each time our light is shared it is not halved but doubled. The new verse I wrote for the hymn 'Jesus bids us shine' reminds us – 'We CAN make a difference, so He bids us shine; You in your small corner and I in mine.'

We CAN make a difference, but Simeon and Anna knew, which was why they were in the temple; our own experience tells us, in good times and not so good, that we can make a difference, but we can't do it on our own. Sometimes, when I am walking up or down the road into town, I step over wires which are being used to re-charge electric cars! And again I am reminded that the cars can only go a certain distance without being re- charged. In a similar way we can only go a certain distance and have the perseverance, patience and hope needed to continue to show the light of God's love, if we are being recharged ourselves. This last year has been a time when it has not been easy to meet together physically for worship, for prayer, for Bible study or for social activities. I certainly look forward to the time next year, when those precious things will be much more regular and much more possible, even though there have been advantages in doing things in different ways. Another advantage, that maybe Covid has given us, is an opportunity to look at where we are in our relationship with God; especially with the recent availability of the Methodist Way of Life cards (contact Stephen or Andrew if you don't have one) helping us in our worship, learning and caring, service and sharing our faith with others – helping us to grow closer to God.

Today is Dec 27<sup>th</sup> – a new year begins on Friday – we don't know what the future holds but, praise God, we do know who holds the future. As we rejoice in the coming of Jesus, God's Son, to our earth and all that that means; as we rejoice in the light that shines in the darkness and which the darkness has never overcome; let us also step boldly into the darkness putting our hand into the hand of God – a hand that will guide us, strengthen us, comfort and support us in all that lies ahead. **Amen.**

### **Hymn MP 107 Cradled in a manger meanly**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO7zCWtatDY>

Cradled in a manger meanly, laid the Son of Man His head.  
Sleeping His first earthly slumber where the oxen had been fed.  
Happy were those shepherds listening to the holy angel's word;  
Happy they within that stable, worshipping their infant Lord.

Happy all who hear the message of His coming from above;  
Happier still who hail His coming and with praises greet His love.  
Blessed Saviour Christ most holy, in a manger Thou didst rest;  
Canst Thou stoop again yet lower, and abide within my breast.  
Evil things are there before Thee; in the heart where they have fed,  
Wilt Thou pitifully enter, Son of Man and lay Thy head?  
Enter, then, O Christ most holy; make a Christmas in my heart;  
Make a heaven of my manger; it is heaven where Thou art.  
And to those who never listened, to the message of Thy birth,  
Who have winter, but no Christmas, bringing them Thy peace on earth,  
Send to these the joyful tidings; by all people in each home,  
Be there heard the Christmas anthem: praise to God the Christ has come.

## Prayers for others

Loving God as we bring before You now our prayers for others:

We pray first for our world with so many needs; effects of Covid, food, clean water, homes, education, health care, fair pay for work done.....

**LOVING GOD INTO THE DARKNESS .....PLEASE BRNG THE LIGHT OF YOUR HOPE,YOUR COMFORT,YOUR STRENGTH AND YOUR PEACE**

We pray for peace in our world-so many places always in the news where for one reason or another there is war, injustice, many refugees, so many people living in fear of what the future may hold.

We pray for those who seek to be peacemakers that you will give them the wisdom, courage and perseverance that they need. **LOVING GOD.....**

We pray for our own country, for the Brexit negotiations that the right decisions will be made for every part of the UK and of Europe. We pray also for many other issues which need to be addressed in our country at this time.....the effects of Covid, the gap between rich and poor, housing, education, health and social care, meaningful employment.

**LOVING GOD.....**

We pray for our circuit, our ministers Stephen and Andrew and the communities we seek to serve. For all our families, friends and neighbours, especially those known to us who are in particular need at this time.

Those who have been bereaved; those who are not well at home or in hospital; those who have particular anxieties at this time for themselves or for family and friends;

**LOVING GOD.....**

And we pray for ourselves –as we face all the different challenges of our everyday lives .....as we seek to follow Jesus and answer his call to be salt and light to those around us

**LOVING GOD ..... Amen**

## **Hymn MP 62 Born in the night.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwiZJqiB4KA>

Born in the night, Mary's child, a long way from Your home:

Coming in need, Mary's child, born in a borrowed room

Clear shining light, Mary's child, Your face lights up our way;

Light of the world, Mary's child, dawn on our darkened day.

Truth of our life, Mary's child, You tell us God is good;

Prove it is true, Mary's child, go to Your cross of wood.

Hope of the world, Mary's child, You're coming soon to reign

King of the earth, Mary's child, walk in our streets again.

## **Closing prayer**

May God, the Lord of the years, help us, as we enter a New Year, to hear the voice of His Son calling us forward, and to know the power and blessing of His Spirit. **Amen.**

## **The Grace**

### **Note:**

#### **Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> December**

10.00pm – KIRKBY STEPHEN CHAPEL HALL will be open for prayer (come and go as you please)

11.30pm – Watchnight Service led by Rev Jackie Betts

Do come and join us or pray with us in your own homes.