

Christ Church and The Bridgewater Drive Church 27 December 2020

Welcome to the joint worship for Christ Church and The Bridgewater Drive Church. This service will be in print only and there will be no recording on Christ Church's Facebook page.

Call to worship

**O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear:
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

As Christmas has passed and we now are anticipating Epiphany, our first hymn is a suitable hymn for this time between Christmas and Epiphany.

Hymn R & S 183

Brightest and best of the Sons of the Morning,
dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid,
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle the dewdrops are shining,
Low lies his head with the beasts of the stall,
angels adore him, in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
odours of Edom and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh of the forest, or gold from the mine.

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Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would his favour secure
richer by far is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the Sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid,
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before you in prayer.
Heavenly Father, you are beyond belief
You love us as a father loves his child,
Not a child that is perfect,
But with all its imperfections.

Heavenly Father, you are our Shepherd –
A Shepherd who seeks us out,
A Shepherd who shows us the way,
A Shepherd who rejoices in one lost sheep who returns to you.

HEAVENLY Father, we have been yours in the past,
Heavenly Father we are yours now,
Heavenly Father, we shall be yours forever,
Heavenly Father we welcome your love,
And will serve you always.

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Creator God,

We come before you in humbleness and in joy,

Forgive us our faults and weaknesses,

Bless this world that you have created,

Remind us always that it does not belong to us,

But that we are custodians of its future. **Amen**

Offertory

As always we give thanks for your continued giving in support of both churches, by standing order or by cheque, especially in this time when people are struggling.

Gracious God, accept these our gifts,

that they may be used in your name

to further the work of your church,

locally, nationwide and worldwide. **Amen**

Reading (1) Psalm 148 verses 1-6 and 11-14

Praise the Lord from heaven, you that live in the heights above. Praise him all his angels, all his heavenly armies. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, shining stars; praise him, highest heavens and the waters above the sky. Let them all praise the name of the Lord! He commanded them and they were created; by his command they were fixed in their places for ever, and they cannot disobey.

Praise him kings and all peoples, princes and all other rulers; young women and young men, old people and children too. Let them praise the name of the Lord! His name is greater than all others; his glory is above earth and heaven. He made his nation strong, so that all his people praise him, the people of Israel, so dear to him.

Reading (2) Galatians Ch. 4 verses 4-7

But when the right time finally came, God sent his own Son. He came as the son of a human mother and lived under the Jewish Law to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might become God's sons and daughters.

To show that you are his sons and daughters, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries out, "Father my Father". So then, you are no longer a slave, but a son or daughter. And since that is what you are, God will give you all that he has for his heirs.

Reflection

When it comes to this time of year, it always puts me in a reflective mood. We are looking back over the year that has gone and looking forward to the year ahead. This is especially true of now, for 2020, to put it politely, has been a difficult year.

We have not had "normal" lives since March and for all of us that has been difficult in one way or another from having to work at home or not seeing our loved ones or not being able to travel or simply enjoy the pleasures life gives us. Now we have some hope that there is light at the end of a still very long tunnel with all kinds of difficulties ahead.

In his Christmas Message, broadcast in 1939, there is a poem that George VI quoted and here is what it says:

**" 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 a better light and safer than a known way"**

Of course this was particularly apt in 1939 with Britain at war and no end in sight with almost five and a half dark years ahead, full of many twists and turns, full of many defeats and victories, but it still applies to us today. One friend I was talking to was full of doom and destruction, but I reminded him of the poem above. In our readings this morning there is joy and hope. In Psalm 148, the psalmist is instructing everyone and everything to worship and praise God. King David's life was full of many twists and turns, ups and downs but at the end of his life his faith in his God was unshaken. The reading from Galatians, too, has a message of hope, for it clearly states in verse 4 that when the time was right, God sent his own son who came in human form to redeem us to become the sons and daughters of Christ. In verse 6 the writer says that to show that we are his sons and daughters, God sent the spirit into our hearts. And verse 7 contains a promise that since we are no longer slaves, but sons and daughters, God will give us all that he has for his heirs.

Some people look upon Christianity as being in the past, but God is always our Heavenly Father, whether we look back to the past, whether we concern ourselves with the here and now or look forward to what might appear an uncertain future. Jesus Christ also is not only our past, but our present and future too. The God is

always with us is as true for us as it was our forebears and will be for the generations still to come.

We are not the first people to be in a difficult place, we need only think of Noah and the flood, the Israelites exiled in Egypt and in Babylon, the Holy Family exiled in Egypt until the death of King Herod would signal it was safe to return. Therefore let us put our hand into God's hand, for he will guide us safely and will never leave us – He is our strength and his Son is our Redeemer for ever and ever. **Amen**

Prayer

Heavenly Father as we come to the close of another year, we remember those whom you have called to you, especially Ernie Lane who died recently. Be with his family and friends as they mourn, but we also give thanks for a life well lived as your loyal servant.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer

We remember all those key workers who have made so many sacrifices, even the loss of their lives, to care for those in hospitals, nursing homes and care homes. We remember the teachers who have continued to teach, initially with the children of key workers, but then with all their pupils as schools were re-opened.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer

We remember the ambulance staff, the firemen and the police, and other key workers who have ensured that we are taken care of, that we are fed, that we are safe.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for those who mourn, who are ill and awaiting treatment or the results of tests. We pray for those who have mental problems created by the effects of COVID 19 and the resultant lockdowns and those who are lonely because they are unable to see their friends and family.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for those who have lost their jobs, those who are struggling to pay their bills and even put food on their table for their families. We pray, in particular, for those we know and who are close to us.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer

Be with them Father that they may know that your Son, Jesus Christ, walks with them and your Holy Spirit supports them with its strength, power, grace and love.

Father we close our prayers, by saying the prayer your Son taught us:

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Our Father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed by the name, Thy kingdom Come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
give us this day our daily bread.
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever **Amen**

Our closing hymn, this morning picks up on the theme of God being always with us.

Hymn R & S 549

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go,
from the old things to the new
keep me travelling along with you.
*And it's from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*
Round the corner of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn;
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me.
*And it's from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*
As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go

you'll be telling me the way, I know.

*And it's from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough,
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you.

*And its from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me,
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you.

*And it's from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*

Blessing

Go out into the world showing the love of God to others;

Shining the light of your savior, Jesus Christ, to guide others;

Secure in the knowledge that God's Holy Spirit will surround you with its strength, its power, its love and its grace.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen

