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## Service for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020 (Toy Service)

*A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

With hearts changed by love, with lives shaped by grace, with relationships braced by integrity, and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon us, come as you are – and as you hope to be – to worship the Lord of Advent.

**Amen.**

During the church service today, we shall light a second candle as a symbol of our pilgrimage towards the things that will last forever: righteousness, loving-kindness, peace and an eternal home in you, O God, who calls all things towards the fullness of life.

**Amen.**

CAROL: The Angel Gabriel

sung by the church choir in a recording from 2001

*If you would like to **listen** to this carol, click the **PLAY** icon on the webpage.*

1 The angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame.  
"All hail," said he, "Thou lowly maiden Mary,  
Most highly favoured lady." Gloria!

2 "For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be,  
all generations laud and honour thee,  
thy son shall be Immanuel, by seers foretold;  
Most highly favoured lady." Gloria!

3 Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head.  
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said.  
"My soul shall laud and magnify God's holy name."  
Most highly favoured lady. Gloria!

4 Of her, Immanuel, the Christ, was born  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn.  
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever  
say: "Most highly favoured lady." Gloria!

Basque carol

### PRAYERS

*Let us pray*

Forgive us, Lord, when we look for your presence in our world in places of wealth, and miss you in the manger; when we pay attention to celebrities and miss you speaking through those in need.

Forgive us, and bless us with the enthusiasm and faith of the shepherds, the quiet obedience and humility of Mary, and the loyalty and strength of Joseph.

**Amen.**

Thank you, gracious God, for choosing shepherds to be witnesses to your Son's birth. They were not rich or influential or of high standing, but they listened to the good news of the angels. They hurried from the fields to the stable. They saw Jesus and believed him to be the Messiah. They shared their joy with all those around them.

May we be like them and see, believe and share. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Good Shepherd, Messiah and King.

**Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy 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.**

SCRIPTURE READING: St Luke 2: 1-15

**2** At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. <sup>2</sup> When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own hometown.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, <sup>6</sup> and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. <sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger—there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, <sup>10</sup> but the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. <sup>11</sup> This very day in David's town your Saviour was born—Christ the Lord! <sup>12</sup> And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!"

<sup>15</sup> When the angels went away from them back 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."

*Thanks be to God.*

CAROL: We three kings

sung by the church choir in a recording from 2017

*If you would like to **listen** to this carol, click the **PLAY** icon on the webpage.*

1 We three kings of Orient are;  
bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
following yonder star.

Refrain:

*O star of wonder, star of light,  
star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading, still proceeding,  
guide us to thy perfect light.*

2 Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,  
gold I bring to crown him again,  
King forever, ceasing never,  
over us all to reign. [Refrain]

3 Frankincense to offer have I;  
incense owns a Deity nigh;  
prayer and praising, all men raising,  
worshipping God on high. [Refrain]

4 Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume  
breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,  
sealed in a stone-cold tomb. [Refrain]

5 Glorious now behold him arise;  
King and God and sacrifice:  
Heaven sings Alleluia,  
Alleluia the earth replies [Refrain]

J H Hopkins

THE SALVATION ARMY TOY APPEAL: *Ms Angela Stallard*

The last few months have changed the way we live, changed the way we work and changed the way we worship. Our lives have changed significantly. As we go forward, there are still changes coming our way, but with a glimmer of hope. However, there are some things that don't change and I want to remind you of some of them.

Outside the college where I studied and trained many years ago, there stands a statue of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. It faces in a direction looking across the city of London and is a constant reminder that the mission of the Salvation Army – and indeed the church – is always looking out for others. I believe, and I know you do, that the message is still the same today: the church exists not just for those who are its members. Our existence is about the Glory of God, about Jesus Christ and about his Holy Spirit living in and through us into the lives of men, women, boys and girls. This is something that hasn't changed.

We live in the most unusual of days. Days that for many of us have created a sense of desperation and fear, loneliness and confusion. So we need to hold on to the things that don't change. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. So as we adapt to our new way of living and worshipping, I pray – and believe – that God is working in our lives and in the lives of those around us more than ever. I have been encouraged to hear some of the innovative work that is being done in and around different communities, where people are embracing new opportunities and people are being blessed and encouraged.

Before preparing my thoughts in my own private devotions, I was given the reading from Matthew's Gospel, Matthew 1: 18-25, about the birth of Jesus. It's that eternal truth, whatever you – whatever we – have to face: "God is with us". Even though we might feel troubled, or even at times fearful, we can be assured that God in Christ is with us. Today, I pray God's blessing – His protection, His love, His grace, His courage – be on us as we go forward.

Thank you for your giving again in this challenging year. When I spoke to the manager of the Salvation Army Home, she said she was wondering how they were going to get on this Christmas because of Covid. Well, she needn't worry because your kindness in this church has shone again and I have a car loaded already from other donations, so never fear. Our God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

CAROL: O little town of Bethlehem

*If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

2 For Christ is born of Mary  
And, gathered all above  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wond'ring love.  
O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And peace to all on earth!

3 How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of his heav'n.  
No ear may hear his coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.

4 O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Immanuel!

Phillips Brooks

#### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Let us pray*

Father, as we travel closer to Christmas, we bring before you those who are finding the journey hard:

- the seriously ill, self-isolating, and those lacking energy and strength for the season;
- the bereaved, mourning while others are celebrating;
- people facing loss of other kinds, perhaps unemployment;
- families torn apart by disagreement, discord or divorce, who dread being together yet face loneliness apart.

Bringer of hope and giver of comfort, renew strength, restore relationships, and refresh faith, we pray.

We pray for the Salvation Army: bless the projects and the work they do. Uphold their staff in your love. May every child who comes into contact with them receive the love and practical care they need.

We pray for all front line workers, medical professionals, care-givers, researchers, vaccine developers and leaders responsible for making decisions about fighting the coronavirus.

In your name we pray,

**Amen.**

CAROL: Go, tell it on the mountain

*If you would like to **sing** this carol, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

Refrain:

*Go tell it on the mountain,*

*Over the hills and ev'rywhere;*

*Go tell it on the mountain*

*That Jesus Christ is born.*

1 While shepherds kept their watching  
O'er silent flocks by night,  
Behold, throughout the heavens  
There shone a holy light. [Refrain]

2 The shepherds feared and trembled  
When lo! above the earth  
Rang out the angel chorus  
That hailed our Saviour's birth. [Refrain]

3 Down in a lowly manger  
The humble Christ was born,  
And God sent us salvation  
That blessed Christmas morn. [Refrain]

Traditional spiritual

CLOSING PRAYER

*Let us pray*

Treasure with Mary the miracle of Christmas.  
Celebrate with the shepherds the joy of Christmas.  
Sing with the angels the song of Christmas.  
And go in the peace of the child of Christmas.

**Amen.**