

Bulletin for Christmas 2021

Happy Christmas, Friends! I hope you all have a warm, comfortable and thoroughly enjoyable Christmas weekend. Just a reminder that there are services in each of our churches at 10 am (i.e. earlier than usual) on Christmas morning, but none on Sunday (Boxing Day). So this Bulletin has an order of service for Christmas worship suitable for whenever you choose to (or have time to!) use it over the weekend. And feel free to add as many of your favourite carols as you like! We pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: While shepherds watched (R&S 155)

Prayer: Amazing God

you come to us unexpectedly... and wonderfully!
Even on these dark mornings the birds still sing
and on the darkest night the stars shine brightly.
Your son was born
into our real, imperfect, complicated world -
a baby welcomed into a very ordinary family...
yet who is also Emmanuel - God with us...
Glad tidings of great joy, indeed!
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
or bring to you or give in your service,
today and every day. In Jesus 'name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Luke chapter 2, verses 1 to 20

Reflection: Everybody must have been exhausted - Mary and Joseph from the journey, closely followed by Mary's labour and, eventually, the birth; the shepherds from looking after their sheep twenty-four hours a day, and living out on the hillside... Then, into the dark, starlit Bethlehem night appeared an angel. Not a small girl in an old sheet with tinsel in her hair, nor a musical creation from Robbie Williams. They both have their merits, but might not be what you want in the small hours when you're sleep-deprived.

This angel brought a message from God. A message which made the shepherds leave their sheep and run down into the town, filled with curiosity and wonder. A message which 'amazed... everyone who heard it'. A message which Mary treasured and 'pondered in her heart' for a long time. A message of 'good news of great joy for all the people'. And, wonderfully, 'all' includes us... so listen:

'To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'

'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace...!' Amen!

Hymn: Who would think that what was needed (R&S 178)

Prayer: Compassionate God, understanding of all our needs,
you were born into our world among the poor,
the sick and those anxious about the future...
We pray for all those who grieve this Christmas,
and for those who live with violence or its threat.
We pray for the sick and those who care for them;
and for those without a safe roof over their head
or food on the table, at this, or any, time of year.
And we pray for those we love... and for ourselves...
Come into our sometimes dark and difficult world,
bringing light and love, hope and joy!
In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers
including the unspoken prayers of our hearts.....
Amen

Hymn: O Come, all ye faithful (R&S 160)

Blessing: May we hear the angel today:
"Don't be afraid -
I'm bringing you good news of great joy!"
and may the blessing of God
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love,
this Christmas, and always. Amen

There won't be a ' Sunday at Six 'Zoom this Sunday, but they resume on 2nd January.

We all have a part to play in caring for each other and doing what we can to keep everyone safe from Covid - wearing masks, giving people space and having plenty of ventilation. The URC's advice is at

<https://urc.org.uk/covid-plan-b-synod-moderators-updated-guidance/>

Please also let us know if you have a positive Covid test after recently being in church.

It's unfortunately impossible to make our churches entirely risk-free.

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