

**Christ Church, Ipswich**  
**Family Worship for the Fourth Sunday in Advent**  
*Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2025 at 10.45*  
*Led by Neil*  
*Organ played by Stephen*

Hello. I hope all is well. Let us worship God together:

**Call to worship**

Come, Lord Jesus. Come be with us.  
 Come be with us in our joys and celebrations.  
 Come be with us in our doubts and difficulties.  
 Come be with us to bless us and inspire us.  
 Come be with us to correct and guide us.  
 Come be with us to heal and save us.  
 Come, Lord Jesus, come.

**A prayer of approach as we light our fourth Advent candle  
 to remind us of our calling to reflect the light of Jesus in this dark world**

Jesus said: You are the world's light...  
 Let your light shine in the sight of all people.  
 Let them see the good things you do  
 and praise your Father in heaven.

**R&S 130 Behold the mountain of the Lord**

1 Behold the mountain of the Lord  
 in latter days shall rise  
 on mountain tops, above the hills,  
 and draw the wondering eyes.

2 To this the joyful nations round,  
 all tribes and tongues, shall flow;  
 up to the hill of God, they'll say,  
 and to his house we'll go.

3 The beam that shines from Zion hill  
 shall lighten every land;  
 the King who reigns in Salem's towers  
 shall all the world command.

4 Among the nations he shall judge;  
 his judgements truth shall guide;  
 his sceptre shall protect the just,  
 and quell the sinner's pride.

5 No strife shall rage, nor hostile feuds  
 disturb those peaceful years;  
 to ploughshares nations beat their swords,  
 to pruning hooks their spears.

6 No longer hosts encountering hosts  
 shall crowds of slain deplore;  
 they hang the trumpet in the hall,  
 and study war no more.

7 Come then, O come, from every land,  
 to worship at his shrine;  
 and, walking in the light of God,  
 with holy beauties shine.

from Isaiah 2: 2-5  
*Scottish Paraphrases, 1781 altd.\**

**A prayer of adoration**

We praise you, eternal God,  
 for the voices you give us,  
 for the roles you entrust to us,  
 for the company you surround us with –  
 angels, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, friends, and family,  
 our communities, and our brothers and sisters around the world.  
 All creation has a share in your redeeming purposes  
 and a place in your heart.  
 Thank you, thank you, thank you. **Amen.**

### **A prayer of confession**

Forgive us, God,  
when we want to be centre stage and not in the wings,  
when we want the leading role and not a bit part,  
when your voice gets drowned out by the sound of our own,  
when stage fright prevents us from playing out part,  
Forgive us and grant us humility, grace and openness to your  
calling – this Advent and far beyond. **Amen.**

### **An assurance of forgiveness**

Gracious God,  
in you no one is insignificant,  
no one goes unnoticed,  
no one is turned away,  
no one is forgotten,  
no promise that you make is broken,  
no plan is unfulfilled.  
So, with confidence, we can lay down  
all that burdens us and step out boldly,  
confidently and forgiven,  
in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

### **A prayer of praise and thanksgiving**

We praise you, God of wisdom, for Mary and Joseph,  
whom you chose to star in the astonishing events of Christ's birth.  
When our lives are overturned by the unexpected,  
and you reach out to us in dreams,  
grant us their love and courage,  
that we may be open to your prompting and witness  
as they were to the coming of your son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Family Time**

#### **R&S 139 The Angel Gabriel from heaven came**

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!*

'For known 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!*

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,  
'To me be as it pleaseth God', she said,  
'my soul shall laud and magnify his holy name':  
most highly favoured lady.  
*Gloria!*

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  
para. S. Baring-Gould (1834-1924)

***The children go to Junior Church with our love and blessing***

**OT Reading: Isaiah 7:10-16****(OT page 580)***Isaiah Gives Ahaz the Sign of Immanuel*

<sup>10</sup> Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup> Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. <sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup> He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup> For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

**Epistle Reading Romans 1:1-7****(NT page 140)***Salutation*

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, <sup>3</sup> the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, <sup>6</sup> including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

<sup>7</sup> To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**R&S 137 Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes**

1 Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,  
the Saviour promised long:  
let every heart prepare a throne,  
and every voice a song.

2 He comes, the prisoners to release  
in Satan's bondage held;  
the gates of brass before him burst,  
the iron fetters yield.

3 He comes, from ignorance and doubt  
to clear the inward sight;  
and on the darkness of the blind  
to pour celestial light.

4 He comes, the broken heart to bind,  
the wounded soul to cure,  
and with the treasures of his grace  
to enrich the humble poor.

5 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
thy welcome shall proclaim;  
and heaven's eternal arches ring  
with thy beloved name.

Philip Doddridge (1702-51) altd.\*

**Gospel Reading Matthew 1:18-25****(NT page 1)***The Birth of Jesus the Messiah*

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

**Reflection***A moment for reflection*

## R&S 178 Who would think that what was needed

1 Who would think that what was needed  
to transform and save the earth  
might not be a plan or army  
proud in purpose, proved in worth?  
Who would think, despite derision,  
that a child should lead the way?  
God surprises earth with heaven,  
coming here on Christmas Day.

2 Shepherds watch and wise men wonder,  
monarchs scorn and angels sing;  
such a place as none would reckon  
hosts a holy, helpless thing;  
stabled beasts and passing strangers  
watch a baby laid in hay:  
God surprises earth with heaven,  
coming here on Christmas Day.

3 Centuries of skill and science  
span the past from which we move,  
yet experience questions whether  
with such progress we improve.  
In our search for sense and meaning,  
lest our hopes and humour fray,  
God surprises earth with heaven,  
coming here on Christmas Day.

John Bell (1949- )  
and Graham Maule (1958- )\*  
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### Our prayers of intercession

#### *God of Unity and Diversity*

At this time of year when we think especially of those close to us, we pray for those who are a long way from the country of their birth and from those they love. Joining with the UN on International Migrants Day, we remember those denied dignity and safety and those who are exploited and abused. We pray for fairer, clearer and more inclusive migration systems.

Come Lord Jesus. Be with those who make journeys and those who make policies.

**Bring hope, peace, courage and comfort to all.**

We pray for our divided world, that the music of tolerance would ring out more loudly than the bullets of hatred. We pray especially for the victims of the Bondi Beach shooting: for the injured, the grieving and for the whole community impacted so terribly. We pray for all those who are victims of violence and especially young people who have lost their lives to gun and knife crimes. We pray for juveniles convicted of violent crimes, for mentors to guide them and for role models to inspire them.

Come Lord Jesus. Be with those who are traumatised and those who are afraid.

**Bring hope, peace, courage and comfort to all.**

We pray for our NHS: For all those struggling to care for the volume of patients entrusted to them; for those hospitalised with flu and life-threatening illnesses; and for all those afraid that their treatment will be impacted or their appointments cancelled by the Resident Doctors' strike. We pray for those who will be working over Christmas, and those on call.

Come Lord Jesus. Be with those who are overwhelmed by responsibilities and those who are vulnerable.

**Bring hope, peace, courage and comfort to all.**

We pray for King Charles and all those whose journey through illness is very public and for those who face their journey alone. We pray for those who know this will be their last Christmas; those who fear that it might be; and those who are celebrating their first Christmas with someone they love.

Come Lord Jesus. Be with those who are joyful and those who are sad.

**Bring hope, peace, courage and comfort to all.**

We pray for those expecting a child this Christmas time; for those whose children have died; for those who have suffered miscarriages; and for those for whom parenthood hasn't been possible. We pray for our churches as they both sing out the joy of Christmas and sit quietly with those whose hearts are heavy and whose lives are broken.

Come Lord Jesus. Be with those who are celebrating and those who are mourning.

**Bring hope, peace, courage and comfort to all.**

And on this shortest day of the year we pray for one another and for the light of Christ to shine brightly in our hearts. We pray for our families, our friends, and our communities. May these last days before Christmas bring opportunities to heal broken relationships; reflect on our journey of faith amidst the tyranny of undone tasks; and give and receive God's precious gift of love.

In Jesus' name,

**Amen**

### **R&S 138 Come, thou long-expected Jesus**

1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us;  
let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear Desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

2 Born thy people to deliver;  
born a child, and yet a King;  
born to reign in us for ever;  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

### **A sending out prayer**

Look forward in hope  
to the coming of your Saviour,  
prepare the way for Christ your Lord;  
welcome him with love and faith  
when he comes in glory.

### **The Blessing**

And may the blessing of God Almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be upon us and those we love, this day and always. **Amen.**

### **The Grace**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore. Amen.**