

THE SERVICE OF THE LORD'S DAY
Sunday 22nd December 2019

Worth Pondering

“The modern natural sciences... increasingly disclose an interconnected world,
a world that is fundamentally and inclusively natural
and within which mind and body are interrelated,
self and other are profoundly related,
human and non-human are mutually dependent,
and faith and reason are integral aspects of one another” *(Michael Hogue)*

HYMN: **“O Come, Light’s Dawning”** *(Tune: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel)*

- 1. O come, light’s dawning, burn within my soul,
The tinder of my heart you can make whole
O come, ignite my passion to see
the truth of who I am, who I can be.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
To fear I bid farewell
that light may come within my heart to dwell.**

- 2. O come, light’s beauty, come amongst and cheer
our spirits by your radiant presence here.
O come, ignite our passion to see
that we can live in peace and harmony,
Rejoice! Rejoice!
To anger bid farewell
that light may come within our hearts to dwell.**

- 3. O come, light’s wisdom, be our certain guide
as arrogance and greed we set aside,
O come, ignite our passion to see,
the beauty born in all humanity.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
To privilege bid farewell
that light may come within our hearts to dwell.**

4. **O come, light's piercing truth, come and reveal
all that our planet needs from us to heal.
O come, ignite our passion to see
the splendour in Earth's vast diversity.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
To darkness bid farewell
that light may come within our hearts to dwell.**

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The Advent Wreath

Today is the fourth Sunday in Advent -
the time when we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child.

We light a candle each week to remind us
that Christ brings light into the dark places of the world.

We light the candle of HOPE
to proclaim that God's light is coming into the world.

We light the candle of PEACE
to proclaim that God's promises will be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ -
Prince of Peace.

We light the candle of JOY
to remind us that even in the midst of darkness, we are called to rejoice

Fourth Sunday in Advent: Love.

We light the candle of LOVE

To remind us of God's call to love God, each other and the creation
Holy God we give thanks for the flame,
symbol of your presence that never fails.

We pray that we may keep the Advent flame alight in our lives,
may we not extinguish it when Christmas is passed.

Amen.

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 286

1. **Light one candle for hope
one bright candle for hope
He brings hope to every heart
He comes! He comes!**

2. **Light one candle for peace
one bright candle for peace
He brings peace to every heart
He comes! He comes!**

3. **Light one candle for joy
one bright candle for joy
Every nation will find salvation
in Bethlehem's baby boy.**

4. **Light one candle for love
one bright candle for love
He brings love to every heart
He comes! He comes!**

Natalie Sleeth 1930-92

WELCOME to all of you.

Your presence here enriches all of us and this time of celebration together.

Opening Sentences:

The season of Advent challenges us

to see God's vision of what is yet to be,

to hear God's voice calling anew,

to smell the scent of God in our world.

Act of Awareness:

It is a still place where love is

and the way is very simple

it is so simple that I cannot understand

how hard it is to find the way

into the silence where love is.

(Jean Clark/cw)

HYMN: TIS 268

1. **Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
let earth receive its king;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**

2. **Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;
let us our songs employ;
while fields and streams, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

3. **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.**

(based on Psalm 98) Isaac Watts 1674-1748 alt.

For many of us life can be just a bit ordinary.
But on occasions we catch sight of something
truly exciting and life-giving.

That is the invitation we call Advent.

(silence)

Let us prepare a manger in our hearts for the birth of the sacred.

For something sacred needs to be born:

born from the mating of what is, and what might be.

**Let us remind ourselves it is a hopeful world,
with a future yet to be constructed, a future
wanting to enlist builders of a better tomorrow.**

This is the season when angels tell us that something sacred wants to be born.
But it needs a manger.

**Let us prepare a manger in our hearts
for the birth of the sacred.**

Davidson Loehr/adapted

HYMN: TIS 318

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from on high,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with you there.**

Anon.

“Creativity” #206 By Dennis McCarty. *Thoughts from a Gentle Atheist/125*

Of any riches life may bestow,
One’s own mind is the brightest gift of all.

No barrier blocks it.

Neither rain nor snow may turn it from its journey.

Only we, ourselves, can destroy this wonderful gift,
By choosing to let it lie fallow.

Let us use our mind-gift with joy,
For the harvesting of the gift
Is also the seeding and fertilising of the gift.

Sharing 'The peace'

This is a house of God. A place of peace.
A place where we befriend one another.

**Let us greet one another as a sign of God's peace
and of our shared friendship.**

The peace of the LORD be with you

And also with you..

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

Let us hear what God the LORD will speak.

**God will speak peace to the people, the faithful,
to those who turn to God in their hearts.**

Nag Hammadi Library:

The Infancy Gospel of James 3:1, 4:1-2, 5:5-9

And Anna looked up to the heavens and saw a nest of sparrows in the laurel tree...

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood in front of her, saying, "Anna, Anna, the Lord God has heard your prayer. You will conceive and give birth and your child will be spoken of everywhere people live."

And Anna said, "As the Lord God lives, whether I give birth to either a male or a female child,
I will bring it as an offering to the Lord my God and it will be a servant to him all the days of its life."

And Anna's pregnancy came to term.

After nine months, she gave birth and she said to the midwife, "What is it?"
The midwife said, "A girl." Anna said, "My soul exalts this day." And she put her baby to bed.

After her days were completed, Anna cleansed her menstrual flow and gave her breast to the child
and gave her the name, Mary.

Matthew 1:18-25 *(Inclusive Text)*

This is how Jesus came to be born.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being righteous, and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally.

Joseph had decided to do this when the angel of God appeared in a dream, and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. 'She will give birth to a child whom you must name Jesus, because this is the one who is to save this people from their sins.'

Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by our God through the prophet:

The young woman will conceive and give birth to a child and they will call this child Emmanuel,
a name which means "God-is-with-us".

When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of God had said and took Mary to their home.

In the testimony of God's people

We hear the Word of the Lord

HYMN: TIS 304: *"O come, all you faithful" (Modernised English Version)*

1. **O come, all you faithful, joyful and triumphant,
come on, O come on to Bethlehem;
come and behold him born the king of angels:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**
2. **See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw close with holy fear;
we too will that way bend our joyful footsteps:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**
3. **Lo, startled chieftains, wise men, Christ adoring,
offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;
we to the Christ child bring our hearts' oblations:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**
4. **Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,
joyful, we embrace you with love and awe;
who would not love you, loving us so dearly?
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**
5. **Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing all ye citizens of heaven above,
'Glory to God, glory in the highest':
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**
6. **Yes, Lord, we greet you, born that happy morning,
Jesus to you be glory given;
Word of the Father now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

A Reflection –

An Affirmation of Faith

In response to the word reflected on, share an affirmation of faith...

We experience the holiness of God

**in wonder of creation
in endless sky and sea;
in breathless beauty and quiet bush;
in acts of courage and silent heart.**

We know God in Jesus of Nazareth

**in gifts of healing and liberations of life;
in recognitions of love and callings to serve;
in sufferings for others and glimpses of grace.**

We live from God's Spirit

**in moments of faith
in dreams beyond hoping
and in rhythms of new energy.**

We name the God who is our centre.

**We claim the goodness that is ours in God.
We announce the truth that lies at the heart of the gospel.
We believe we are not alone
in our struggle to be the church.**

(Dorothy McRae-McMahon/eoj)

NOTICES:

OFFERING & DEDICATION:

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & The Lord's Prayer

HYMN: TIS 311

- 1. Silent night, holy night:
all is calm, all is bright
round the virgin mother and child,
holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.**

2. **Silent night, holy night:
shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing, 'Alleluia!
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.'**

3. **Silent night, holy night:
wondrous star, lend your light;
with the angels let us sing
Alleluia to our King;
Christ our Saviour is born,
Christ our Saviour is born.**

*Joseph Mohr 1792-1848
tr. John Freeman Young 1820-85 alt.*

Parting Words

Time has now come for us to leave this sacred place.

As we do, may we embrace the challenges of our lives and our world...

Leave here with the certainty that God loves you and travels with you.

Relax in God's love,

we will love in openness to God's spirit moving within us.

Go to live as God's people:

**as God's eyes, God's heart and God's hands,
in the name of Christ. Amen.**

BLESSING: May the Spirit of God,

sower of seed, nurturer of hope, and gardener of harmony,
continue with us today, tomorrow, and always.

Amen! May it be so!

TIS 779:

**May the feet of God walk with you,
and God's` hand hold you tight,
May the eye of God rest on you,
and God's ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you,
and God's breath give you life.
May the Child of God grow in you,
and God's love bring you home.**

Aubrey Podlich 1946-

TIS 778:

**Shalom to you now,
shalom my friends.
May God's full mercies
bless you my friends.
In all your living
and through your loving;
Christ be your shalom.
Christ be your shalom.**

Elise Shoemaker Eslinger 1942-