

The Bride Valley Telephone Service for New Year's Day 2023

Christmas 2 (available on 01308 293062)

Greeting

O Lord, our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honour.

(from Psalm 8)

Hymn: Brightest and Best

1 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.

2 Cold on his cradle the dew-drops 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.

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

4 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.

5 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.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826) Public Domain

Invitation to Confession

As we come to the Lord at the start of this New Year, let us seek his grace to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom as we confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Kyrie Confession

Lord Jesus, you are a mighty God and Prince of Peace:

Lord have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are Son of God and Son of Mary:

Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are Word made flesh and splendour of the Father:

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy**

Absolution

May the Lord forgive us from all our sins as we start afresh this year. **Amen.**

Collect: *Let us pray*

O God, by whose command the order of time runs its course: forgive our impatience, perfect our faith and, while we wait for the fulfilment of your promises, grant us to have good hope because of your word; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings

Old Testament: Numbers 6:22-26

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."

New Testament: Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Gospel: Luke 2:15-21

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Reflection

'Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart'

I wonder how often Mary thought about those special things as she brought Jesus up, teaching and guiding him along the way, over the years. How often did she remember who he really was? Hourly, daily, each Sabbath day?

And what about us? As we begin this New Year, will Jesus be at the centre of our lives throughout 2023, or will we pack him up with our Christmas Decorations and put him away until next Christmas, or possibly Easter.

During December, some of us have been involved in spreading the joy of Christmas, painting and hiding stars for others to find, decorating our front gardens and doors and windows in all sorts of creative ways. We've also been involved in helping others, gifts for displaced young people, collecting for foodbanks and donations to the

homeless charities as well as carol singing for the Children's Society. And we've been inviting people to our celebrations and acting out aspects of the Christmas story. I wonder what we have taken to heart from the Christmas story for ourselves and what part of the Good News we are wanting to share with others? We might even ask ourselves; what next? I think this is summed up beautifully in the words of Henry Thurman's *The Work of Christmas*: "*When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flock, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among others, to make music in the heart.*"

More people than ever, it seemed, over the Christmas services held across the Valley, came to the Altar rail this year for a blessing. And I prayed that blessing from Isaiah: "*The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*"

For this year, 2023, I'm going to try to pray that prayer over those I meet, all those I come across, going through good times and bad. I wonder if you'd like to join me in blessing all those around us this year and praying that prayer of blessing over them and also each other. **Amen.**

The Renewal of the Covenant

The New Year is a great opportunity to reflect on our lives and perhaps renew our relationship with God, I have therefore included the words for the renewal of the covenant.

Eternal God, in your faithful and enduring love you call us to share in your gracious covenant in Jesus Christ.

In obedience we hear and accept your commands; in love we seek to do your perfect will; with joy we offer ourselves anew to you. We are no longer our own but yours.

I am no longer my own but yours. Your will, not mine be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none; when I am troubled and when I am at peace. Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when I have nothing. I willingly offer all that I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose. Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. May it be so forever. Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for God's faithfulness to be known in our world.

In a world of change and hope, of fear and adventure, faithful God **glorify your name.**
In human rebellion and obedience, in our seeking and our finding, faithful God **glorify your name.**

In the common life of our society, in prosperity and need, faithful God **glorify your name.**

As your Church proclaims your goodness in words and action, faithful God **glorify your name.**

Among our friends and in our homes, faithful God **glorify your name.**

In our times of joy, in our days of sorrow, faithful God **glorify your name.**

In our strengths and triumphs, in our weakness and at our death, faithful God **glorify your name.**

In your saints in glory and on the day of Christ's coming, faithful God **glorify your name. Amen.**

Final Hymn: Joy to the World

1 Joy to the world! The Lord is come!

Let earth receive her 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!

Your sweetest songs employ
while fields and floods, 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.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) Public Domain

Blessing

May the Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England material from which is included in this service, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2000 & Common Worship: Times and Seasons.