

The Bride Valley Telephone Service for Christmas Day 2022

We will be lighting the Christmas Day Candle in Church and you may wish to light a candle at home if it is safe to do so

Opening Sentences

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord. *Psalm 98*

Prayer at the lighting of the Christmas Candle

Lord Jesus, Light of light, you have come among us. Help us who live by your light to shine as lights in your world. Glory to God in the highest. Amen.

First Carol: O Come All Ye Faithful

1 O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant
O come ye, o come ye 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 God of God, Light of Light;
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten not created;

Refrain

3 Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest:

Refrain

4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning:
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing;

Refrain

Translated from the Latin (18th century) by Frederick Oakely (1802-1880) CCLI Licence 2370586

We pray together...

Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, wise men, animals ... and us!

Thank you that everyone is welcome around the manger.

We open our hearts to receive your gift of love, in the name of Jesus Christ, born for us today, Amen.

Prayers of Penitence

We say sorry to God for the things we've done wrong ...

We haven't always loved you like Mary did. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

We haven't always cared for others like Joseph did.

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

We haven't always shared your good news like the angels did.

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

Absolution ... God forgives us!

May the God of love and power forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by his Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect: Let us pray

Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth: accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you, our Saviour and our eternal God. Amen

Isaiah 52:7-10

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.' Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Hebrews 1:1-12

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.' Of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire.' But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.' And, 'In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.'

Carol: 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.

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Reflection

The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Becoming flesh is incredibly messy. I don't know what your experiences of being born (if you can remember!), or giving birth which you possibly don't even want to remember are. Babies interrupt our lives in the most inconvenient ways possible. Becoming flesh is the most painful, messy, disruptive, undignified, exposing thing you can think of. And also, the most miraculous and astounding.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us ... and interrupted all we ever thought we knew about God, life, the universe and everything. The word became flesh and interrupted all our ideas about God being invisible, impassable, ineffable (which means unknowable), immutable, omnipotent, and all the other 'omnis' you can think of. Because here is God, if you believe this claim of the gospel of John, made flesh among us, the invisible made visible, the impassable suffering hunger and tummy ache as any other infant, the ineffable needing love to thrive, the immutable needing to suckle his mother's milk to grow, the omnipotent as weak as a day-old baby ... The word became flesh and dwelt among us ... and was laid in an animal feeding trough. And as we gaze in wonder we learn. We learn that God chose to be with us. God emptied God's-self to be with us, to be one of us, to be among us. I can't think of anything more inconvenient or unlikely or undignified or that could leave God more exposed. Nor more miraculous and astounding.

From now on all our thoughts about God neatly up there and out of the way, have to change. God has interrupted our way of keeping him ordered and safely out of our existence, tucked away behind a cloud somewhere. God is here among us, making himself dependent on our love. And we rejected him. Of course we did. How many of us can allow ourselves to be that undignified? I mean who wants to be caught gazing at a baby in wonder, utterly divested of everything we had thought that was important up to now? Who wants to be totally undone by a baby's reciprocal gaze and have that baby completely re-order our lives around it? Change us from the inside out? Upend all our priorities? Open our eyes to the frailty and value of each human being and the whole of created life? Who can afford to be that vulnerable, that naked, that exposed?

'But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.'

May God interrupt us again this Christmas and may we be overwhelmed once more by his grace and truth and glory.

Creed

Jesus, the light of the world has come! Let us declare our faith in God.

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high. We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Christmas Intercessions

Lord, hear our prayers for those who specially need your light and love during this Christmas season.

Mary gave birth to Jesus in a strange town, where there was no room at the inn, so we pray for all who are lonely or rejected: for children separated from their families, for refugees driven from their own land, for homeless people in many towns and cities, and for old people living in organisations,

community workers and concerned neighbours who seek to offer them friendship, welcome and support. Lord of light and love: **deliver the world from darkness.**

Jesus was born in poverty with a feeding trough for his cradle. So we pray for all those children born in poverty and deprivation, for those families whose daily lives are a desperate struggle for survival, against hunger, disease, lack of work or education. We pray for those who seek a fairer world in which everyone can enjoy the opportunity for fullness of life.

Lord of light and love: **deliver the world from darkness.**

Jesus' life was in danger in Bethlehem, so we pray for all those who live in danger today, in places of violence and conflict, where bomb and gun destroy social order, property and human lives. We pray for children who are abused at home or bullied at school; for those who suffer from racial abuse; for wives battered by their husbands and for all victims of violent crime. We pray for the medical and social services, the police force and the charities and church groups, who seek to bring help, safety and healing; and for diplomats and politicians involved in delicate negotiations for peace.

Lord of light and love: **deliver the world from darkness.**

Jesus was welcomed into the world by the singing of the angels, the wonder of the shepherds, the worship of wise men and the love of his parents. So we pray for our communities, our homes and families, our schools and churches, our places of work and leisure, that Christ's living spirit may be welcomed among us today bringing hope and joy to the world. Lord of light and love: **deliver the world from darkness.**

We pray the prayer Jesus taught us...

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

1 Hark! the herald angels sing,
glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim:
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

*Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King!*

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
Hail the incarnate Deity!

Final Carol: Hark! the herald-angels sing

Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel:

*Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King!*

3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings;
mild he lays his glory by,
born that man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give them second birth:

*Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born King!"*

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) Public Domain

God sends us out to serve God in the world, wherever we are ... Jesus, the light of the world has come! Are you ready to share the Good News of Christmas with everyone? **We are!** Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen.**