**Christmas Day 2020**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. *(The candle is lit.)*
Those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them has the light shined.

     For a child has been born to us;
     a Son given to us.

   Authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named:
     Wonderful Counsellor;      Mighty God;      Everlasting Father;     Prince of Peace.

**CAROL: O Come all ye faithful**

**Opening prayer**Hope of the world,
come to us as the baby born in Bethlehem.
Come and open our hearts and minds;
open our lives to the child within each one of us.
Open our lives to the presence of children in our community.
Hope of the world,
help us to put aside our privilege and power
and renew our spirit of wonder and awe.
Release us to rest in the presence of love;
restore to each other the other's lost infancy.
Hope of the world,
Come to us as the baby born in Bethlehem.

**A Christmas Day Prayer**

Jesus, child of the crib,
with Mary, who gave birth to you,
with the innkeeper, who found a stable for you,
with Joseph, who protected you,
with the animals of the stable, who watched over you,
with the angels, who sang of you,
with the shepherds, who ran to you,
with our brothers and sisters throughout the world,
we welcome you.
Jesus, Saviour of the world, we welcome you.
Amen.

**What’s in the suitcase?**

**Always going out to the shops and forgetting my face mask!**

**Imagine you are Mary packing for the journey down to Bethlehem. What would you take with you?**

**Generation Game – conveyor belt. Try and remember all these items.**

**Lesson:**

We try our best to be prepared for life and whatever it brings us. Scouts have their motto “Be Prepared’. We can take out insurances, travel, mortgage, car, life insurance to try and be prepared for whatever may happen – but no matter how prepared we are for the journey through life, life has a way of being unpredictable and challenging at times. That has certainly been the case this year. Faith doesn’t give you certainty- it doesn’t give you all the answers, it doesn’t mean you don’t get anxious of have worries, it doesn’t mean you are promised a care free life - – but hopefully gives you courage to face those challenges, knowing that you are not alone.

God is with you.

**CAROL Who would think that what was needed**

**Reading: Luke 2.8-20**

**Do not be afraid!**

It is not helpful to tell people who are anxious and worried ‘do not be afraid!’ Fear and stress, anxiety or worry is a part of life. Whether you are about to sit your driving test, or facing a job interview, or are worried about your health, your finances or this pandemic and the latest mutant virus that is threatening to derail the vaccination programme - anxiety is understandable.

It’s not having anxious thoughts that is the problem it’s what we do with them when we have them.

Throughout the Christmas story the angels pop up and say this line ‘do not be afraid’ repeatedly to Joseph, Mary and the Shepherds. But they don’t just leave it at that. They don’t just say ‘don’t worry’. They say ‘don’t be afraid because…and then give grounds for why we should not be anxious.

So to Joseph: an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21**She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’), because he will save his people from their sins.’

To Mary: the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. **31**You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32**He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33**and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.’

To the Shepherds: An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10**But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11**Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Some people say the coronavirus is God’s judgement on us. We should fear God they say, repent and believe. That attitude, that type of belief about God seems to be the opposite of what the angels announce. Instead of saying ‘be afraid God is with us’, they actually say ‘don’t be afraid God is with us.

God so loved the world that he gave us his Son.

Love came down at Christmas, not God’s anger and punishment.

These are worrying times and frustrating times.

Christmas Day most years brings many things: heights of emotions, and depths too. There are things we expect of ourselves, and high expectations sometimes bring disappointments.

This Christmas Day we have the backdrop of a world wide pandemic and the ongoing anxiety that brings and the isolation and distancing we have to observe.

Feelings of anxiety can be reminders to turn to God, prompting you to pray or to hand those issues over to God each time they arise. For God is love.

God will speak into your fears, anxieties and concerns if you let God. I can’t do this for you. We each have to work out our own faith. Do you seek the Lord?

Will you spend a moment in prayer, listening for God? Will you spend time reading the scriptures? Will you be open to God’s angels, in whatever guise they come to address you? ‘Do Not be afraid… because God…..’

Coming today to church is a way of making a small moment of quiet in the middle of a day of high expectations and maybe anxieties. Look at the light of the Advent/Christmas candles. These lights burn for us – to remind us, and warm us, that love is the centre of all things. Nurture and celebrate this love.

**Love came down at Christmas,**

**Love all lovely, Love Divine,**

**Love was born at Christmas,**

**Star and Angels gave the sign.**

**CAROL: Love Came down at Christmas**

Prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for the joys of this day:
for the joy of giving and receiving;
the joy, perhaps, of reunion with family and friends;
the joys of feasting and of laughter.
We thank you, Lord, for the singing of carols and Christmas hymns;
for the reading of loved and familiar words of scripture;
the joys of worship and holy celebration.

Thanks be to you, Lord, for the challenge of Christmas;
for your coming in poverty
which challenges the affluence we take for granted;
for your self-giving
which puts in perspective all our charity.

Lord, give us pause in all our celebrations to contemplate the mystery of your holy incarnation.

Father, we pray for those who at Christmas are made more aware of their own loneliness:
for those who get no presents, or very few;
for those who have no families, or whose families are far away or whose families they are unable to meet up with this year because of the restrictions.
We pray for those to whom Christmas brings sharp memories of happier ones.
Christ be with them and grant them consolation.

Lord of all good, your Word is in the world. Teach us to hear him, and so to celebrate his birth that we may be born again to a life of righteousness.

Today, in all the demands,
we pray for those who are facing a Christmas
without someone they love.
God of goodness,
hear us and be with us.

Today, in all the delights,
we pray for those who are facing a Christmas alone.
God of goodness…
hear us and be with us.

Today, in all the celebrations, we pray for those who are facing conflicts.
God of goodness…
hear us and be with us.

Today, in all the time at tables, we pray for those who are hungry.
God of goodness… hear us and be with us.

God, you remind us that the truest gift is the gift of love.
Today, giving and unwrapping gifts, with joy and maybe even disappointment, let us love one another, because love comes from you. And love is the best thing worth celebrating.
Amen.

**Carol: See in Yonder Manger low**