

ORDER OF SERVICE: ST ANDREWS

Christmas Day Service

25 December 2023

Call to Worship:

The water is poured, reminding us of our baptism in Christ.

The Christ candle is lit, reminding us of Christ's presence with us.

The Bible is opened, reminding us of the Word of God, come to us.

These past four weeks we have been following the story of those who have waited for the coming of the Lord.

We sing:

Advent candles tell their story as we watch and pray,
longing for the Day of Glory, 'Come, Lord, soon,' we say.

Pain and sorrow, tears and sadness
changed for gladness on that Day.

The first candle is lit.

Prophet voices loudly crying, making pathways clear;
glimpsing glory, self-denying, calling all to hear.

Through their message - challenged, shaken –
hearts awaken: God is near!

The second candle is lit .

John the Baptist, by his preaching and by water poured,
brought to those who heard his teaching news of hope restored:
'Keep your vision strong and steady, and be ready for the Lord.'

The third candle is lit.

Mary's gift, beyond all telling, was to give Christ room.
She gave God a human dwelling in a mother's womb.

Who could guess the final story? - cross and glory; empty tomb!
The fourth candle is lit.

Advent candles tell their story on this Christmas Day.
 Those who waited for God's glory: they prepared the way.
 Christ is with us: loving, giving, in us living, here today!
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Joy to the world!
The Lord has come!
 Jesus is the light of the world.
A light no darkness can ever put out.

Scripture Sentences:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.
 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

-John 1: 1-5

SONG: TIS 272: Come Thou long expected Jesus (refer attached song sheet)

Prayer of Confession:

Let us pray:
 Great God,
 lover of all people,
 you came into our darkness.
 From pure and perfect light you entered our world
 and gave us your light.

**We worship you today,
 for you are wonderful
 and perfect
 and righteous.**

Your light attracts us.

It shows us the way.

It warms us and fills us with hope.

**We worship you today,
for just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so your ways are higher than ours.**

Your light makes us see the darkness of the world,
and the darkness of our lives.

Yet no darkness is too dark for you to enlighten.

And so we ask you to come and fill us with your light.

Come, Lord Jesus.

**Please forgive us for the darkness of our sin,
and fill us with the light of your Spirit.**

**Help us to live in the light,
that we may honour Jesus.**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Words of Assurance:

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

-Isaiah 9: 2, 6.

So I declare to us all I Jesus' name:

Our sins are forgiven!

Thanks be to God.

SONG: TIS 304: O come all ye faithful. (refer to attached song sheet)

Greeting and Reading: Luke 2: 1-7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

SONG: TIS 311: Silent Night (refer to attached song sheet)

Greeting and Reading: Luke 2: 8-14

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men
on whom his favour rests."*

SONG: TIS 299: While shepherds watched their flocks by night
(refer to attached song sheet)

Story of a Saint: Nicholas of Myra

Reading: Luke 2: 15-20

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

SONG: TIS 309: Angels from the realms of glory (refer to attached song sheet)

Reflection on the Word:

SONG: TIS 526: (Modified) Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us

Lord Jesus Christ,
 you have come to us,
 you are one with us,
 Mary's son;
 cleansing our souls from all their sin,
 pouring your love and goodness in,
 Jesus, for you our love we sing,
 living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
 you have come to us,
 born as one of us,
 Human One.
 This is a holy mystery:
 how could our God be born like me?
 Yet in this way you set us free,
 living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
I would come to you,
live my life for you,
Son of God.

All your commands I know are true,
your many gifts will make me new,
into my life your power breaks through,
living Lord.

Prayer of Intercession:

Let us pray, for others and ourselves.

O Lord our God,

as we experience Christmas, change our hearts.

Make us generous with our time, our possessions, our friendship and our welcome.

Set us free from bondage to the things of this world, so that we might know a foretaste of your world to come.

We pray for those who will be hungry this Christmas. Lord, make us generous to give in ways that they may be fed. Help us to be satisfied to live more simply, so that others may share in the harvest of the world.

We pray for those who will be alone this Christmas. Lord, make us generous with our relationships, so that we may be friends to the friendless. Make us want to care for everyone, so that everyone may know your love through us.

Give us grace, Lord, that we might live and love like Jesus, that we might give of ourselves like him.

We pray for those who are sick and those who are frail. Lord, make us generous with our time, so that we will go and visit them. Transform our hearts so that we forget our busyness and stay with them a while longer.

We pray for those who are trapped in addiction. Lord make us generous with our love, so that we will learn not to judge them for their failings. Open us to seeing Christ in them, and give them hope.

Give us compassion, Lord, to count the cost so that our generosity is not too small, but reflects your grace to us.

We pray for those who are in prison this Christmas, and those recently released. Lord make us generous with our welcome, so that they will know your care. Remind us that Jesus died for them, like us, and keep us humble.

We pray for those who will be homeless this Christmas. Lord, make us generous in helping to provide shelter for those in need. Give us a desire to make a difference.

Give us wisdom, Lord, to live out your call to love others as you have loved us: not only in emotion, but also in practice.

We pray for ourselves this Christmas; we who so easily get caught up in the materialism of our world. Help us to hold loosely to what we have, so that we might hold more tightly to Jesus.

Lord, we ask you to bring an end to hunger and loneliness and sickness and addiction and fear and persecution. And Lord, if your answer to this prayer is in us, transform our hearts so that we will do your will this Christmas.

**Make us closer followers of Jesus, in whose name we pray.
Amen.**

SONG: TIS 268: Joy to the World. (refer to attached song sheet)

Blessing:

May the Light of the World shine in your dark places,
May the Prince of Peace deal gently with your conflict,
May the man of Sorrows bring you greater joy,
And may the Resurrected One give you life.

**May the babe in the manger grow in your heart,
that you may know the fullness of Jesus,
who lived and died and lives again.**

And may He lead you on to eternal life.

Amen.

[You are invited to light a candle as you leave the sanctuary.]

PREACHER FOR NEXT WEEK: NO SERVICE Sunday 31

PREACHER FOR 7 JANUARY 2024: Rev Graham Sturdy