



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on December 12th 2021 at 10:45,
meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.**

We are now able to meet in person, although we do have to wear masks once again. As everyone is not yet able to return, we still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast a recording of the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Welcome to our All-Age Christmas Celebration and Communion, with the Theme: The Treasure of Christmas, led by Tim, with Morag playing the piano and Kate the violin.

Welcome and Lighting the Advent Candles

We have four candles for the four weeks of advent - there are various traditions of what they represent, but often we remember hope, love, **joy** and peace. We light the third candle representing joy today - because the coming of Jesus ('advent' means coming to us) is just the best good news - news we should really celebrate with joy and excitement.

(Tim lights the candles)

That is what our first song is about - it invites us to come and imagine the experiences of those involved in the first Christmas and celebrate the coming of Jesus. We can sing or read our first Carol: **Come and Join the Celebration**

Come and join the celebration
it's a very special day;
come and share our jubilation;
there's a new King born today!

See, the shepherds hurry down to Bethlehem,
gaze in wonder at the Son of God who lay before them -
Come and join the celebration

Wise men journey, led to worship by a star;
kneel in homage, bringing precious gifts from lands afar, so
Come and join the celebration

"God is with us" round the world the message bring ;
He is with us - "Welcome", all the bells on earth are pealing.
Come and join the celebration

Tim leads in a brief Prayer

"Thank you so much, Jesus, that, at Christmas time especially, but also all through the year, we can celebrate your coming with joy. Thank you for all the reminders this time of year provides for us of what you have done for us. We pray, that, as we unpack a bit more today the truth of your coming as a baby all those years ago, we may all realise just what an amazing thing you did in coming into our world to save us. Be with us today and teach us, inspire us and strengthen us through your Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen."

Tim leads us in **A Treasure Hunt**

Who would like to go on a treasure hunt this morning? Would you like to come and join me here? **(Tim doesn't get much response!!!, Colin says yes, and is invited to join Tim at the front)**

Finding treasure is exciting, isn't it? And the treasure we are looking for today is the greatest treasure of all. It is more valuable and precious than gold or silver or even diamonds. Now, in order to find treasure, we need what? A treasure map. Fortunately we have one here (pick up a Bible and wave it around). There's a clue on the screen as to where to look in the treasure map to find the treasure (Luke chapter 2, verse 12).

The congregation read it out so we can all hear it.'This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.' So where do you think the treasure is? That's right, in the manger - so can we find the manger? **(Colin is despatched to look for, and finds and brings the manger with baby Jesus to the front of the church)**. Wow... look at that. The treasure that we've found is a baby - baby Jesus...

Jesus is the treasure of Christmas... and later on we are going to find out why. But for now, let's hear what happened when Jesus was born and why he was in a manger as we have our Bible reading.

Dramatised Bible Reading: Luke 2: 1-20: with congregation participation!

Before we begin, we will need all of you (the congregation) to be the group of angels that praise God during the reading. We will have the words, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to all on whom his favour rests" on the screen and we'll need you to say them clearly at the relevant point!

We will also need some volunteers to be the emperor Augustus... Mary and Joseph... two shepherds... and an angel.

(Augustus - Keith, goes up on the stage to the lectern to make an announcement)

Augustus: I am the Emperor Augustus and I order that a census be taken throughout the Roman Empire. This is the first census I have called. And just so you know the historical time when this happened - Quirinius was the governor of Syria.

(Augustus sits down and Mary and Joseph (Joy and Colin) come to the microphone stand)

Joseph: Because of the census called by the emperor, I and Mary, my fiancée, had to leave Nazareth in Galilee to make the journey to my home town, Bethlehem, so that I could register there, because I am a descendent of King David, who was from there.

(Joseph and Mary 'travel' to Bethlehem - a short circuit within the church, back to the microphone stand)

Mary: I am expecting baby Jesus, my firstborn child, and while we were in Bethlehem the time came for him to be born. (Mary picks up baby Jesus)

Joseph: There was no room for us to stay in the family guest room, so Mary wrapped Jesus in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger. (Mary lays Jesus in the manger).

(Joseph and Mary stand near the manger. Shepherds 1 and 2 - both Tonys - come to the microphone, angel - Janet - goes up on stage to the lectern)

Shepherd 1: We were out in the fields near Bethlehem, keeping watch over our flocks at night, when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to us and the glory of the Lord shone around.

Shepherd 2: We were terrified!

Angel: I said to the shepherds: "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."

Shepherd 1: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God.

Everyone: GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND ON EARTH PEACE TO ALL ON WHOM HIS FAVOUR RESTS.

(Angel sits down again)

Shepherd 2: When the angels had left us and gone into heaven I said to the other shepherds: let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened - which the Lord has told us about.

(Shepherds go to briefly 'visit' the manger, then come back to the microphone stand)

Shepherd 1: We found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Shepherd 2: Once we had seen baby Jesus, we went and told people what the angels had said to us about him and everyone we told was amazed.

Mary: I treasured all these things up in my heart and thought about them often.

Shepherd 1: We returned to our sheep, glorifying and praising God for all the things we had heard and seen which were just as we had been told by the angels.

Thanks everyone! Let's sing another song now about these events - and we'll take up our offering as we sing this one.

Song: Silent Night

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, and all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child, Holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia!
Christ, the Saviour, is born! Christ, the Saviour, is born!

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Songwriters: Joseph Mohr / Franz Xaver Gruber
Public domain, CCL. No 5664

(As the offering is received Tim prays)

We thank God for the all the ways he has blessed us and ask you Lord that these, our gifts, be used wisely and well in your service. Amen.

It's good that we have special times of year and songs to remind us about important things that have happened. God also gives us instructions to share another very special reminder of why Jesus was born in Bethlehem and what he came to do for us. This is our time of communion and Alec is going to lead us in this today, as we also specially welcome Victor and Nike as members of our church.

Alec moves to the front of the church, and reminds us all of the privileges and responsibilities of membership, together with a brief recap of Victor and Nikes journey to Blackburn. Originally from Nigeria, they first attended here in January 2019, so it is a great joy to be able to finally welcome them into membership. Victor has been involved in Baptist Churches in Nigeria for many years, whilst Nike has recently been helping to lead a choir in Birmingham, so perhaps that is gift she will be able to share here.

On the screen, Alec shared:

Church members may attend and vote at Church Meetings, where important decisions about the life and work of the church are made.

The responsibilities:

Living a distinctive lifestyle as a follower of Jesus, nourished by personal prayer and Bible study

Loving and welcoming all who come amongst us, considering them as equals in God's sight, seeking to serve them as neighbours.

Taking time to develop relationships within the church, being hospitable and encouraging, seeking to build up the gifts found in every person.

Giving time to activities we undertake together so as to encourage and deepen the corporate life of the church, and so as to engage with the wider community with the good news of Jesus.

Giving financially with a generous spirit to support the work of the church.

Supporting, respecting, praying for the church leaders.

Regularly joining with the congregation as we seek to worship God, sharing in communion, engaging in the prayer life of the church.

Attending Church Meetings as we seek to discern the mind of Christ for all we do.

He then formally welcomed Victor and Nike into membership, and welcomed Charlotte and the soon-to-be born baby!

Alec invited the Deacons who were present to share in prayer

Loving heavenly father we thank you and praise you for Victor and Nike and Charlotte and for the new child due in January. We thank you for this family, for leading them to faith in their own country. Thank you for bringing them to this country and for being with them each and every day in the difficult times they have faced again and again and in the difficult situations with which they have been confronted. Thank you that they love you, they have faith in you, they are faithful to you. We ask you as they are officially now recognised in our congregation at this time at a communion service, as members of the Church we are one in you and we praise you for them and ask that we may be enabled to fellowship with them with an open heart, with joyous hearts, to be able to strengthen them in their faith as they strengthen us that we may be able to live together and fellowship together as children of the king. This we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for us and who you raised from the dead to give us new life. We pray and praise you in Jesus name Amen.

Alec then led a time of communion together.

"On the night when he was betrayed Jesus took the bread and when he had broken it, he gave thanks. Let's give thanks for the broken body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Loving heavenly father how we praise you for your love for us, that you sent your only son, your beloved son, the creator and sustainer of this universe, you sent him of your own free choice, into this world to die a horrible death on the cross. We thank you that you and he were prepared to die for us, to give us forgiveness for our sins. So we thank you as we join individually and together in this bread, we thank you for all that you are and all that you are doing and all that you will do for us because you have forgiven us for our sins. In Jesus name. Amen

Before Colin and Joy come and distribute the bread we will just need to remember that if you are over 12 years of age, if you have given your life and heart and if you are living in fellowship with him and with believers everywhere, pleased be encouraged and as the word of God says commanded to share in this meal with us, and if not please let the elements go by and we will pray a blessing for you."

Colin and Joy distributed the bread which was eaten as it was received.

Alec continues:

"In the same way he also took the cup and after he had given thanks blessed it. We give thanks for the spilt blood of our Lord.

Loving heavenly father we praise you once again for the death of your son on the cross, for his blood that was shed for us. Scarcely would you die for a good man but you died for us sinners a horrible death. We thank you for your love to us and we will share together, waiting and drinking together, this cup to remind us of what you have done for us and to encourage us to remember that you are coming again. Thank you for the new life that you have given us and for the fellowship that we have with another in your son. Amen.

Colin and Joy distribute the wine,

the cups being retained so that all drank together as Alec said the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us drink together to show our fellowship together in Jesus Christ.

(Joy and Colin collected all the cups at this point!)

Tim now gave an Illustrated Talk: Jesus - The Treasure of Christmas

Earlier we said that Jesus is the treasure of Christmas. But why is that? How could a baby be called treasure? Well, this baby is no ordinary baby. Jesus is God's Son - he is God - and he came to earth to give us some very precious and valuable treasures. Inside my treasure chest here are things to help explain to us some of the treasures that Jesus came to give us - and I need some volunteers to come and help me unwrap them, one at a time.

(Colin volunteered). What does your piece of treasure have written on the outside of it? ('LOVE') What's inside? ('Love-hearts' sweets). The first treasure that Jesus has come to give us is his LOVE. Each of us is so precious to God the Father that he was willing to send his Son Jesus to earth for us. Jesus came with a message from God the Father. The message is "I love you" as these love-hearts say. He says that to each one of us.

But Jesus didn't simply come to tell us how much we are loved. He came to show us how much we are loved. Let's find out what he did as we unwrap our second treasure. (Get second volunteer to take out parcel 2 from the treasure chest - Victor.) What does your piece of treasure have written on the outside of it? ('FORGIVENESS') (Victor opens it) What's inside? (A rubber). The second treasure that Jesus has come to give us is FORGIVENESS. When the angels spoke to the shepherds, they said: "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you" A Saviour is someone who comes to our rescue... but why do we need rescuing? We need a rescuer because we have all rebelled against God and done wrong things, which the Bible calls sin. As a result of those wrong things we cannot know our Heavenly Father and we are separated from him. Jesus came to earth to pay the price for our sin so that we won't have to. He did that when he was crucified on a cross, rising from the dead three days later. If we choose to put our trust in him... it's like he takes a rubber and rubs out all of the wrong things we have done. We are forgiven!

Not only that, but he gives us something else. Let's find out what as we unwrap our third treasure. (Get third volunteer to take out parcel 3 from the treasure chest - Joy.) What does your piece of treasure have written on the outside of it? ('PEACE WITH GOD') (Joy opens it) What's inside? (A dove). The third treasure that Jesus has come to give us is PEACE WITH GOD. Once we have been forgiven for our sins, we can enjoy a real relationship with our Heavenly Father... we are now his friends and have peace with him - and a dove is a symbol of that peace. All is now well between us and our Heavenly Father. Like we all read out earlier, the angels said, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

This is an amazing treasure... but there is more. Let's find out as we unwrap our fourth treasure. (Get fourth volunteer to take out parcel 4 from the treasure chest- Charlotte, with a little bit of help from Daddy) What does your piece of treasure have written on the outside of it? ('ETERNAL LIFE') (Charlotte opens it) What's inside? (A packet of sunflower seeds). The fourth treasure that Jesus has come to give us is ETERNAL LIFE. So what is eternal life? This is what Jesus said about it in John 17 verse 3: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Eternal life is about having a relationship with God not just in this life, but for all eternity. Because of that, we need no longer fear death, for the Bible promises us that one day we will be raised from the dead into God's eternal kingdom. Those seeds remind us of that promise... they might look dead now, but when buried in the ground one day they will be raised to life and produce beautiful plants.

So four incredible treasures that Jesus has come to give us: the treasure of God's love, the treasure of God's forgiveness, the treasure of peace with God and the

treasure of eternal life - and these are treasures you can only find in Jesus - nowhere else. We can see now why Jesus is the treasure of Christmas.

But we're not finished yet - inside my treasure chest I have three more treasures that Jesus has come to give us and I will need three more volunteers to come and help me unwrap them. (Get fifth volunteer to take out parcel 5 from the treasure chest - Tony F.) What does your piece of treasure have written on the outside of it? ('JOY') Like the candle at the beginning of our service. (Tony opens it) What's inside? (Bubbles). Maybe you would like to blow a few bubbles as I talk?! The fifth treasure that Jesus has come to give us is JOY. When we know that we are loved and forgiven by God and are walking with him through life, we know joy deep inside our hearts. This is joy that bubbles up and out of us, like these bubbles. Joy cannot be taken from us even when we go through hard or difficult times and one of the reasons for that is found in our next piece of treasure.

(Get sixth volunteer to take out parcel 6 from the treasure chest - Alec.) What does your piece of treasure have written on the outside of it? ('PRESENCE'). (Alec opens it) What's inside? (A battery). The sixth treasure that Jesus has come to give us is his powerful PRESENCE. Jesus has promised to always be with his followers. He does that by sending the powerful Holy Spirit to come and live inside them. You could say that the Holy Spirit is a bit like a powerful 'battery pack' for those who trust in Jesus. He gives us all that we need to live the life that God has called us to live. He reassures us through the hard times that God has not abandoned us and is still at work in our lives.

Let's open our last piece of treasure. (Get last volunteer to take out parcel 7 from the treasure chest - Charlotte again!) What does your piece of treasure have written on the outside of it? ('HOPE'). (Charlotte opens it) What's inside? (A crown). The seventh treasure that Jesus has come to give us is HOPE. One day Jesus has promised to return to earth. When he comes, he will reign over the earth as King, which the crown reminds us of. In Jesus' kingdom there is joy and peace, love and kindness.... and so when he returns there will be no more pain or death, no more suffering and evil.

What amazing treasures Jesus offers to each one of us... treasures of love, forgiveness, peace with God and eternal life. Treasures of joy, his powerful presence and hope for the future. All of these treasures are found in Jesus, who came to earth as a baby over two thousand years ago, and who is alive and with us today by his Spirit. Thank you to all the volunteers!

Response and Prayers

So how do we receive all of these treasures that Jesus has come to bring us? We simply need to:

- Believe that Jesus is the Son of God who came into our world
- Turn away from our self-centred lives and ask him for forgiveness
- Welcome him into our lives

Let's be quiet for a few moments and think about how amazing it is that Jesus came to earth to offer us all these wonderful treasures (pause). John said this: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

If you would like to welcome Jesus and all the treasure he has come to bring you into your life today, or to give thanks that you have already received them, please join in with the prayer on the screen. Please join in with the words in bold text.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your great love for us.

Thank you, Jesus

We believe that you are the Son of God who came to earth to rescue us.

We believe

We come to you as our Saviour and ask you to forgive us for all the wrong things we have done in our lives.

Please forgive us

We choose to turn away from living as we please and welcome you into our lives as Lord.

We welcome you

Thank you that you offer us the gift of eternal life which we gladly receive.

We receive from you

Please come and fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Come and fill us

Amen

And Father God, we also pray for those who are in special need of you today. For those who are sick or in pain, physical or mental, or who are lonely or bereaved. We pray your comfort and help on them. We pray this for those we know in this church and for others we don't know, but who still need your touch. We pray too for those for whom Christmas may be a hard time because they have no home, or friends and family - and for all those who will be trying to help people like that this year. Amen

Let's join in with our final song which reminds us how the angels sang about the greatness of the child who was born in the manger. At the end, as we leave, please take two gold or silver coins from the box. These coins are a reminder that Jesus is the 'real treasure of Christmas'. One of the coins is for you to enjoy and the other coin is for you to share the 'treasure of Jesus' with someone else, because treasure is for sharing!

Time for our closing Carol: Hark the Herald Angels Sing

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 th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!

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:
pleased, as man, with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!

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 son of earth, born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King !"

Words: Charles Wesley, Music F Mendelsohn
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As he brought the worship to a close, Tim reminded us of the notices:

- Refreshments - very welcome to stay, but please just sit at tables and wait for drinks to be brought rather than congregating at the serving hatch
- Ladies Bible Study - Brenda will not be able to lead as planned this week - could those who normally go have a word with Gwynneth afterwards to decide whether the group will meet or not
- Carol singing - revised date?
- Next Sunday - don't come at the usual 10.45 am time! 4 pm next week for Candlelit carols

And finally, Tim encouraged us with a **Benediction**

"As we come to the end of the service today, go out rejoicing in the treasure that Jesus has come to give you this Christmas! And let's share the words of the Grace together."

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen

Don't forget your two coins!