



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, meeting at Bethesda Chapel once more, on Sunday December 20th 2020 at 4pm, for a Candle-lit Carol Service

For those not able to meet in person at present, 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.

We welcome those who are watching the recording either at 4pm or later. The service should be available to watch on Youtube. We also welcome those who are reading this at home.

Our service today, the fourth and final **Sunday in Advent**, is led by **Alec, our Pastor**. As he is at present still in Germany, he will be leading it on Zoom, via the Internet.

Our service begins with Alec welcoming us all:

"Good afternoon everybody! And a very warm welcome to you all, to the 2020 edition of the Blackburn Baptist Church Candle-lit Carol service here in Bethesda Chapel, Galligreaves, Blackburn, England. An especially warm welcome to you if you are here in the chapel today for the first time, but wherever you ever, whoever you are, and whenever you are watching, may God bless you and us richly in this time together. Before we light the candle, may I give you one or two notices of events in the coming weeks? Tomorrow evening from 7.30pm we join in the zoom quiz, so ably prepared by Brenda, by Trevor and by Tim; on Thursday evening at 7.30-8pm that is on Holy Night, we join together on zoom for prayer; Friday morning, at 10-.45, Tim will lead us in our brief Christmas Day service, and next Sunday morning from 10.45 Colin will lead our final service of 2020, here in Bethesda Chapel.

And now once again before we light the candles, let's ask our Father in heaven to lead us in this afternoon. **Let us pray together:**

Our loving heavenly Father,

What a year this has been, but you have called us through the difficulties and new challenges we have been faced with. What a year this has been, but you have strengthened our hearts and minds when anxiety and depression have threatened to take away our peace. What a year this has been, but you have always been with us, comforting us and giving us hope. So we are here today, at the chapel today, to say thank you to you, to give you our praise and worship, and to adore you. When we see the lighted candles we are reminded of your son, Jesus Christ, coming into the world. He is the light in our darkness, the true light, the never-failing light. We ask you to

lead us and guide us in this short time together, as we share in the singing and in the reading of your word; open our hearts and our minds to see and to recognise and to rejoice in your grace, your mercy and your love for us, your people, for we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Now before we sing our first hymn, Once in royal David's city, let's at last light the candle, after which our service should progress more or less unannounced, following the powerpoint presentation, until I interrupt the flow with a short Bible message. So to the candles:"

Paul C comes forward to the Advent wreath.

"Over the past few weeks in advent we have been lighting a candle each week, to signify qualities, that, at this time of year, we celebrate. If you remember the first was for hope that we had in a Saviour that was to come. The second was peace that he offers, no matter what our situation is. Last week we concentrated on his love for us in all that he's done, and today , as we've come together, we're going to look at joy. So I'm just going to read a short prayer about joy and then we will light that fourth candle, prior to that one in the centre that we will light on Christmas morning.

Let us pray:

Father God, when faced with circumstances that are not of my choosing, and denied those things that cause me delight - grant me the joy of your presence this day, and the contentment of knowing that I am held for all eternity in your grace. Amen"

(Paul lights the candle!)

Once in royal David's city

Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her Baby
in a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven,
who is God and Lord of all,
and His shelter was a stable,
and His cradle was a stall;
with the poor, and mean, and lowly,
lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,
through His own redeeming love;
for that Child so dear and gentle
is our Lord in heaven above,
And He leads His children on
to the place where He is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
with the oxen standing by,
we shall see Him; but in heaven,
set at God's right hand on high;
when like stars His children crowned
all in white shall wait around.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWMGe9U3mNw>

Words CF Alexander, Music H Gauntlett.

CCL no 5664

The first reading: Genesis 3:8-15, 17,19, (Jean W)

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,
"Cursed are you above all livestock

and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity

between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head,

and you will strike his heel."

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;

through painful toil you will eat food from it

all the days of your life.
By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.

"Thanks be to God."

Infant holy

Infant holy, infant lowly,
for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
nowells ringing, tidings bringing;
Christ the babe is Lord of all;
Christ the babe is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new;
saw the glory, heard the story -
tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you;
Christ the babe was born for you!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCTTEtdKTwY>

("Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God nothing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."
Philippians 2:5-7 ESV)

Translated from the Polish,
E M G Reed (1885-1933)

CCL no 5664

The second reading: Isaiah 9:2,6-7 (Hywel W)

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness 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.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

"May God bless our reading'.

Joy to the world

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.

Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLURukXoht8>

Used by permission Engage Worship.

Words, Isaac Watts

CCL no 5664

The third reading: Isaiah 11:1-3a; 4a; 6-9

(Ellie)

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—
and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling[a] together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

O holy night

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,
it is the night of the dear Saviour's birth;
long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'til he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world¹ rejoices,
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;
Fall on your knees, oh hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;
chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
and in his name all oppression shall cease,
sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we;
let all within us praise his Holy name!

Christ is the Lord, O praise his name forever.
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!
(Fall on your knees, oh hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.
O night divine! O night, o night divine!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asQI44iO2ZE>

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The fourth reading: Micah 5, 2-4

(Esther)

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times."
Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labour bears a son,
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.
He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.

"Thanks be to God for his word"

O little town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem
how still we see thee lie;
above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting Light,
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together

proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King
and Peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given;
so God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming
but in this world of sin
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in
be born to us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6D6-IHd3pUc>

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Songwriters: Jeremy Michael Lubbock / Pierre Marchand / Sarah McLachlan
CCL No 5664

The fifth reading: Matthew 1, 18-23 (Victor)

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, 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. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

Message

Alec

One year ago singing „Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht“ here in Bethesda we could not have conceived of the events that would challenge us during the following twelve months. We might have asked ourselves already today on this fourth Sunday in Advent, „How did these things come about?“

But there is something more newsworthy than a pandemic, something more dramatic than government press conferences and ongoing media press coverage, something which changes our lives and our very being more than constantly modified rules and regulations, something more interesting, more exciting and more important than whether and how, when and with what chances of success we are going to be able to be vaccinated against this or that virus.

For on exactly this final Sunday in Advent we should remember the coming of Jesus and remind ourselves once more as Victor read from Matthew of how the birth of Jesus Christ came about and what this can mean for each of us and all of us, each day of our earthly lives and in the life beyond the grave.

It is an amazing story. But it is also an event which comforts us in our struggles, gives us hope in our seemingly endless uncertainties and inspires us to live on in the face of frequent anxiety and depression.

I can hear you asking, even from this distance, that`s all well and good but has this been tested? Exactly how does it work? How can I get access to this Jesus? How long does his help last?

Let me just tell you what the account in Matthew shows us.

That God knows who we are. That he knows what our background is. That he is aware of and understands the details of our family life. That he knows our character, our lifestyle, our principles, our way of thinking. He knows our very being. That is what Joseph experienced.

But this God, our God, is not like someone who is and has been collecting information and data to misuse us, to take advantage of us, to harm us. He is not a God who is unknown and unknowable. He is not a God who does not care and who only intervenes in our lives to exploit and abuse us.

The God that Joseph got to know spoke to him in a dream through an angel, telling him not to be afraid and reminding him of the words of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah.

In the same way he speaks to us through his Word the Bible, tells us not to be afraid, guides us, directs us and leads us in and through our short and troubled lives on this earth.

When God spoke to Joseph through an angel he 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. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.“ (vv. 20-21).

That is why we celebrate Advent, that is why Jesus came into the world he himself made.

To save his people from their sins, to sort out the mess we are in in our lives, to give us, to give you new life.

But not only that. As it says in v. 23, „The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel-which means God with us.“

Jesus, who comes into the world to save his people from their sins, is God with us.

When you are waiting in a pandemic for a hospital appointment

When you are not allowed to visit your dearest family members because of fear of being infected

When you long to meet with your friends and neighbours but the regulations prohibit it.

God knows, God cares, trust him.

In Psalm 42:11 we read, „Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise him, my Saviour and my God.“

Amen.

Away in a manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cHqj2ah2tA>

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Words: v1&2 unknown, v3 J T McFarland
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The sixth reading:

Luke 2:1-7

(Colin)

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 guest room available for them.

“May the Lord richly bless the reading of his word to our hearts and lives this Christmas.”

Silent night

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, 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;
Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia!
Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour is born!

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2f1JK0s5E8>

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The seventh reading:

Luke 2:8-20

(Janet)

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 that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, 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 heaven,

and on earth, peace to those on whom his favour rests."

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.

"May God bless his word to each one of us."

Hark the herald angels sing

Hark the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
join the triumph of the skies
with angelic hosts proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ by highest Heav'n adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
offspring of a virgions'womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
hail the incarnate deity.
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the Heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
ris'n 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 newborn King!"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ml_m7b6kgJg

Charles Wesley/Felix Mendelssohn CCL no 5664

The eighth reading: Matthew 2, 1-12

(Jonny)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

O come all you faithful

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.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning
Jesus, to thee be all glory given!
Word of the Father
Late in flesh appearing.
 O come let us adore him....

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

O come let us adore him...

(And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him" Matthew 2:11 ESV)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsGudbJg_Io

CCL no 5664

The ninth reading:

John 1, 1-14

(Shirley)

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 all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome[a] it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
Amen

Alec now brings our time together to a close

We have almost come to the end now of our 2020 Blackburn Baptist Church Candle-lit Carol Service, our service of nine lessons and nine carols, and at this point I think it is appropriate that we express our thanks to all those who have so actively taken part in reading for us this afternoon, all those who have prepared on a technical side the rather difficult task of uniting us over many hundreds of miles, but more than anything else, we want to thank God that he sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world, the light of the world, into our darkness. I'm going to close in prayer and then share the blessing.

Our loving heavenly Father,

We thank you from our hearts that you sent your son, your only beloved son, into the world to die for us, that we might be free from the mess that we got ourselves into,

and that we might have new life through his resurrection from the dead. You gave your son that we might have life, and we want to thank you at this time of year as we especially remember his coming into the world as a baby, the one one who made the universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, come to earth as a baby for us. We thank you and praise you for this and for the fact that you have been with us in this hour this evening, and we know that you will continue to be with us each day during the rest of this Advent period, and the Christmas period and into the New Year. Thank you that you are our God.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, May the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you, may the Lord turn his face towards you and give you his peace, Amen.

We trust and pray that you will all know God's love and peace in your hearts and lives in this very unusual Christmas time, and that the time will quickly come when we will be able to meet to worship God together once again.

(On a personal level, can I ask that you will forgive any typing mistakes, its been rather a mammoth exercise to produce the service sheet, and I suspect it may not arrive before Christmas unless the postman is very industrious! I will send out the Christmas Day service as soon as possible, but again there will probably be a time lag, so Christmas will last a bit longer than usual this year!

I have included the words to the carols as they were displayed at Bethesda, so some may be slightly different from those you generally sing, but in the privacy of your own home you can sing the words you are most familiar with, as loudly as you wish, making a joyful noise to the glory of God.

I wish you all God's blessings at this Christmas time and look forward to the time when we can again meet as a Church family)

Judith

