

Christmas Morning

at Mill Grove 10.30 a.m. 2022



Triptych Two: Light Shining in Bethlehem

Happy Christmas to family, neighbours, and friends. Last night we were praying for you all as we placed candles on the map of the world during our Christmas Eve Communion service. This Christmas Day morning, we know that some of the churches that have been alongside Mill Grove with prayer and practical support this year, are worshipping at the same time as us. We are grateful to them for their being alongside us and join with them in joyful thanks that all good things come from our Heavenly Father, including Jesus Christ, the most precious gift of all.

Let's begin with the carol, O Come all ye faithful, written especially for Christmas Day...

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!

God of God, Light of Light
Lo, He abhors not the Virgin's womb
Very God
Begotten, not created
O come, let us adore Him...

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God
All glory in the highest
O come, let us adore Him...

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning
Jesus, to Thee be glory given
Word of the Father
Now in flesh appearing
O come, let us adore Him...

Prayer

Greetings

A selection of Christmas cards and greetings that we have received from family and friends from near and far including...

Australia, Canada, Germany, France, Holland, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Portugal, Scotland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Uganda, USA, Wales and Zambia

Readings

John 1: 1-14

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 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.

Luke 2: 8-18

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said,

"May glory be given to God in the highest heaven!
And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!"

The angels left and went into heaven. Then the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem. Let's 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. The baby was lying in the manger. After the shepherds had seen him, they told everyone. They reported what the angel had said about this child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Thought for Christmas Day

Triptych Two: Light Shining in Bethlehem

Last night during our Communion Service we focused on the first panel of the triptych, revisiting the words of the prophets for whom the darkness on earth seemed like an endless night, but who were given the revelation that *the dawn would come*.

At the darkest time of the year in our part of the world, with the longest nights, Christmas reminds us that the promised light still shines. Whatever attempts there have been to extinguish that light, it burns on, if sometimes flickering. The darkness has not been able to put it out (John: 1) and simply cannot understand it.

There are different sorts of light in the story of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. I wonder whether you can identify any of them?

They are: *the glory* that shone above the shepherds outside in the fields; and later, there was *the star* that led the Wise Men to the Christ-child; artists often picture light radiating from the baby Jesus. Let's follow *the light of the Christ-child*...

At the dawn of Creation, God created light, and John begins his gospel with a retelling of creation. This time the Creator has entered His world and the light of God shines through a unique human being. It will shine through his life and teaching, his miracles, until He is rejected. While on the cross, there were three hours of darkness, because of an unforgettably vicious and cosmic battle raging between darkness and light. When Jesus cried out as one forsaken by the Father who loved Him dearly, and whom He served unswervingly, it seemed as if darkness had finally won. That there would be no more dawn.

But early on the morning of the third day, as dawn broke, it was discovered that the tomb was empty. God had raised His dear Son from the dead. From this point on, the future would never again be in doubt: no need for pagan festivals seeking to appease the spirits of darkness: light had triumphed over darkness in Jesus.

As we prayed last night, we were aware that there are millions around the world right now who are in darkness of many different kinds. There is no universal miracle which will bring dawn into every heart and home simultaneously. But the birth, life, resurrection and death of Jesus, are God's guarantee sealed with the blood of Christ, that light still shines in the darkness.

In the darkest places, through the darkest experiences, there is for all who trust Jesus, the assurance that the light still shines. No tyranny, no power, not even death can put it out.

God has promised that Eternal Day is coming, but we don't know when. In the meantime, we know that the One who came as light into the world, continues to shine His love, grace and forgiveness into our hearts.

Prayer

Advent Wreath Happy Birthday, Jesus!

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

A Blessing

"God grant you the light of Christmas, which is faith;
the warmth of Christmas, which is purity;
the righteousness of Christmas, which is justice;
the belief in Christmas, which is truth;
the all of Christmas, which is Christ."

News and Sharing