

Mill Grove Christmas Morning 2023



Joy

The Advent Wreath and the reminders of Communion are in place.

Two panels of the Triptych are open with the candle, Love, in front of the first picture.

The second candle, Joy is in the middle of the map of the world.

A joyful Christmas to family, neighbours, and friends!

Last night some of us were praying for you all as we placed candles on the map of the world during our Christmas Eve Communion service.

This Christmas morning, we know that right now some of the churches that have been alongside Mill Grove with prayer and practical support this year, are worshipping. 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 a carol 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

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. *Luke 2: 1-20*

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. *Matthew 2: 9-11*

You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a *glorious, inexpressible joy*. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls. This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward.

They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen. *I Peter 1: 6-12*

Triptych Two: Joy

A Message for Christmas Day

Last night during our Communion Service we focused on the first panel of the triptych, and the theme was Love.

As we shared bread and wine together around the map of the world, we remembered that Christmas is all about God's love for the whole world. He loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son.

And He wants nothing more than for each of us to join Him at His family table, to be part of His family forever. Father, Son and Holy Spirit loving each other in perfect harmony, and a place with our name on it right in their midst.

Now, let's look at the second and central part of this year's triptych. It's a familiar scene with angels sounding news of joy in the night sky above the manger.

As in the first picture, there is a dove. The dove represents the Holy Spirit. There would never have been Christmas with the Holy Spirit, and we would never have known about Christmas either had not the Holy Spirit moved witnesses to tell the story of Jesus and His love. No one can "get it" unless they are helped. And He is the Helper who leads us to understanding and faith. Let's ask Him to help us now...

The message of the angels at the first Christmas was "good news of mega joy" for all people.

And the Wise Men were overjoyed.

Peter, who followed Jesus found it impossible to express his joy.

Why do you think that there was so much joy?

A Baby. The birth of any baby is a cause of joy.

A Promise. But this baby is the one who confirms that God has remembered His promise. This is the anointed one, Messiah.

A Saviour. He has not forgotten the poor, the captives, the sick and the sinners. He came to make a way back to God “from the dark paths of sin”

A Light. Shining in the darkness, that can never be put out.

Mary, Zechariah and Simeon put all of this into songs of praise.

From the beginning of the human species people have been trying to imagine God with all kinds of rituals, sacrifices and religions. And this has resulted in lots of unhappiness and darkness.

Christmas is full of joy, because at last we can see exactly what God is like.

We can see the whole truth of God, His character and nature in this baby. He reveals His greatness in His humility.

He has come among us, as one of us.

This is not about what we try to do to find or please Him.

We can't. Our human minds and our sin get in the way.

This is wonderfully fresh news.

Most of all it is the joy of love. We are loved...with an everlasting love.

God so loved the world...that He gave His only Son.

Once we get this, there is no greater joy!

Prayers

For Ourselves: Thank You, heavenly Father, for loving us so much that you gave us the gift of Jesus your dear Son. We know that we don't deserve your love, and so are full of joy as we realise that you forgive us and welcome us into your family.

For Others: Please Help us to be and share good news, and where we cannot, to trust You to bring healing, forgiveness and peace.

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

May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ child
be ours this Christmas.

All **Amen**

The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship
of the Holy spirit be with us all evermore.

All **Amen**

News, Sharing and Refreshments

Please feel free to take this sheet with you as a souvenir of today.
You will find it and other service programmes on the Mill Grove website.
www.millgrove.org.uk