

**Worship at Home service Sunday 27th
November 2022 with Revd Ian Forsyth**

Opening prayer:

Amazing and loving God, as we meet together inspire us by your word, renew us with your Spirit and unite us as we worship you, creator, redeemer and sustainer.

Amen.

StF 180 – O come O come Immanuel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4Q_Q-4

O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on Sinai's height in ancient times did give the law in cloud and majesty and awe.

O come, O Branch of Jesse, free your own from Satan's tyranny; From depths of hell your people save, and give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, O Key of David, come and open wide our heavenly home. Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery:

O come, O Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by your advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and deaths dark shadows put to flight:

Bible readings

Matthew 24 v 36 - 44 NIV

Psalms 122

Advent prayers:

Loving God, accept our glad thanksgiving for all you have given us, and hear now our prayers for the world.

We pray for those for whom there is no celebration, the poor and the hungry, the homeless and the sick, the lonely and the bereaved, the oppressed and the persecuted. Lord, you call us to respond to their need: **Help us to reach out in love.**

We pray for those whose celebration is marred by fear, those who are anxious for themselves or a loved one, who see no hope in the future, or who live under the constant threat of danger. Lord, you call us to respond to their need: **Help us to reach out in love.**

We pray for all who wrestle with grief. Those whose lives have been broken by tragedy, who live each day in perpetual shadow, crushed by the burden of sorrow. Lord, you call us to respond to their need: **Help us to reach out in love.**

We pray for all who feel isolated, those who feel unloved, unwanted, who find it hard to show love towards others, or whose relationships have been broken by cruelty, discord, and division. Lord, you call us to respond to their need: **Help us to reach out in love.**

Loving God may your light reach into the darkest places of the world, so that there may be hope rather than despair, joy rather than sorrow and love rather than hatred. Lord, you call us to respond to their need: **Help us to reach out in love.**

Come now to our world through Jesus Christ, to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free. Lord, you call us to respond to their need: **Help us to reach out in love.** Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Time to reflect:

In our Bible reading today we are reminded to 'be ready, walk in his paths and finally to keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.'

Are we ready for Christmas? Many people have already started to make preparations for this Christmas.

My grandma would always say she started saving up for the next Christmas on Boxing Day!

How do I get ready and prepare for Christmas? In my late forties I started a new tradition of playing a Handel's Messiah CD in my car listening to it full volume. The opening words from Isaiah, Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain, somehow the words and music helped me prepare for Christmas.

In the last three years I have been following the Celtic Christian tradition of advent readings starting on 15th November, forty days before Christmas, sometimes called the forgotten Lent. Often, we follow the forty days lent before Easter day where we celebrate the Death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world but 40 days before Christmas reminds us of the importance of Jesus birth in the Christmas story.

One of my favourite carols is Hark the herald Angels sing, 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 we no more may die, born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.

For me Christmas Day is so special when we can celebrate the birth of Jesus and the miracle of his birth as a miracle.

One line reads 'born to give us second birth' In just six words this Christmas message is for you and me, reminding us that there is a gift of eternal life in the here and now, giving us hope. At Christmas we receive Christmas presents however the most precious gift we can receive this Christmas is the gift of God's presence with us as we sing the Song Emmanuel, God with us inviting us to say thank you Lord for your gift of Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour today.

As we close our first advent reflection here is a Christmas prayer you can say on Christmas day and the days leading up to it.

Heavenly Father, we thank you today for this food. We will enjoy it. We thank you also for the real meaning of Christmas – that you sent your Son to be the Saviour of the World – our Saviour. We accept both this food, and the gift of Your Son, with grateful hearts. Amen

Finally, may we 'be ready to walk in his paths and to keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.' This Christmas may we receive the greatest gift of his presence with us both in the here and now and for all eternity.

StF 213 – O little town of Bethlehem

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUCIW1jyIR4>

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.

O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King
and peace to all the earth!
For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love..

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
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 in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel!

Final prayer:

Lord, we pray that in all our preparations for the coming week and for Christmas, we may find time to spend time with you. Help us to be prayerful, watchful, and full of hope for your coming.

Amen.