



Chet Valley Churches



Christmas Day Holy Communion

25th December 2020

Greeting

Today Christ is born: **Alleluia!**

Today the Saviour comes: **Alleluia!**

Today the angels sing on earth: **Alleluia! Glory to God in the highest.**

The Lighting of the Christmas Candle

God our Father, today the Saviour is born and those who live in darkness are seeing a great light. Help us, who greet the birth of Christ with joy, to live in the light of your Son and to share the good news of your love.

**We ask this through Jesus Christ,
the light who has come into the world.**

♪ Hymn: *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen*

**God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray.**

*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

**From God our heavenly Father
A blessed angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.**

O tidings of comfort and joy...

**The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
This blessed babe to find.**

O tidings of comfort and joy...

**But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat the infant lay,
They found him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His mother Mary, kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray:**

O tidings of comfort and joy...

**Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.**

O tidings of comfort and joy...



Confession

The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith. Lord of grace and truth, we confess our unworthiness to stand in your presence as your children.

We have sinned: **Forgive us and heal us.**

The Virgin Mary accepted your call to be the mother of Jesus.
Forgive our disobedience to your will.

We have sinned: **Forgive us and heal us.**

Your Son our Saviour was born in poverty in a manger.
Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.

We have sinned: **Forgive us and heal us.**

The shepherds left their flocks to go to Bethlehem.
Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision.

We have sinned: **Forgive us and heal us.**

The wise men followed the star to find Jesus the King.
Forgive our reluctance to seek you.

We have sinned: **Forgive us and heal us.**

The president proclaims God's forgiveness

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw you to himself and cleanse you from all your sins, that you may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

🎵 **Hymn: Ding Dong Merrily on High (Gloria)**

**Ding dong, merrily on high!
In heav'n the bells are ringing;
Ding dong, verily the sky
Is riv'n with angel singing.
Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!
Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!**



**E'en so here below,
Let steeple bells be swungen,
And io, io, io,
By priest and people sungen.
Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!
Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!**

**Pray ye dutifully prime
Your matin chime, ye ringers;
May ye beautifully rhyme
Your evetime song, ye singers.
Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!
Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!**

Collect: Prayer for the Day

The president introduces a period of silent prayer. The collect is said, and all respond: Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God. **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading: *Isaiah 52:7-10*

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.' Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle: *Hebrews 1:1-12*

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'

Of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire.' But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'

And, 'In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.'

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

🎵 **Hymn: How Far Is It to Bethlehem**

**How far is it to Bethlehem,
Not very far?
Shall we find the stable room
Lit by a star?
Can we see the little child,
Is he within?
If we lift the wooden latch,
May we go in?**

**May we stroke the creatures there,
Oxen or sheep?
May we peek like them and see
Jesus asleep?
If we touch his tiny hand,
Will he awake?
Will he know we've come so far
Just for his sake?**

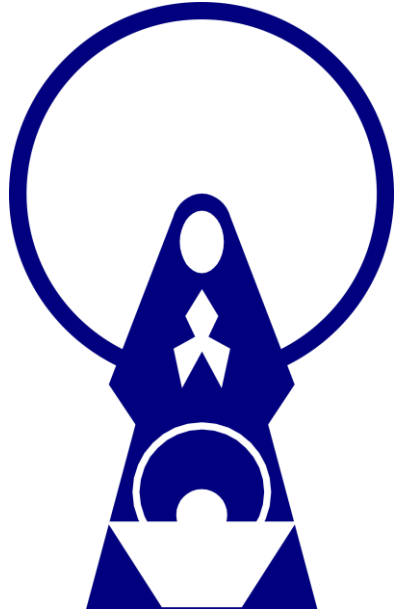
**Great kings have precious gifts,
And we have naught;
Little smiles and little tears
Are all we brought.
For all weary children
Mary must weep;
Here, on his bed of straw,
Sleep, children, sleep.**

**God, in his mother's arms,
Babes in the byre,
Sleep, as they sleep who find
Their heart's desire.**

📖 **Gospel Reading John 1:1-14**

Alleluia, Alleluia. The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory. **Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon [Belinda Barwick]

Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never overcome it.

As dark periods in our world's life go, there aren't many times quite as dark and difficult as these present days. The pandemic is dominating our media and most aspects of our lives. The enforced separation from friends and family can feel devastating, the carrot of everything being alright for Christmas cruelly whipped away just as many had thought it within their reach. Physical contact with others limited, no cups of coffee in someone's house, no singing in church, no going up to London to see the lights (remember those days?), no travelling to see family members, no cinema trips, no catching up with ex-colleagues, no meals out with a group of friends. When Cromwell notoriously cancelled all outward celebrations of Christmas after the Civil War, at least people could get together behind closed doors. And just to make matters worse, there's no really good scapegoat either. We may complain about the government or grumble

about the scientists, but in the end it comes down to one very small living thing, the Coronavirus: Covid 19.

There used to be a lot of worry at one time that compassion fatigue would set in with too many charity appeals and we'd all become inured to the sufferings of others and unwilling to help those in need. Whether that was ever a thing and whether it is a fact now I can't say, but I do think that the opposite, compassion overload, is weighing heavily on us. Day after day we see terrible suffering and hear of mounting death tolls. In refugee camps, in war-torn countries like Syria, Yemen and South Sudan, the need is heart-breaking. We hear individual heart-rending stories. It has a devastating effect.

In the 19th century, John Donne wrote, "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind." That as much as anything else, is what makes this time so hard. We're all one, united in suffering and grief. And yet for many of us at this point it is not a personal tragedy, it's the sadness of others. What do we do with that?

How do we cope with that degree of darkness? How do we do it properly, not trying to trick ourselves that everything is fine, when it manifestly is not? I think this is where that herald coming over the mountain comes in; the one that Isaiah wrote about. The herald hasn't arrived but he's on his way with his message of hope. For Isaiah's original audience, a country crushed by the might of Babylon, this might have seemed a distant prospect but Isaiah is telling them that hope is on its way. There is light coming, a tiny flicker to start with, but it will grow—just as there is hope for us with the vaccine against the seemingly invincible virus. Our deliverance has been announced and our hope is not foolish—but meanwhile, how do we find a way out of the darkness of this present time? What should we do?

As Christians we often feel guilty if we're not up and doing. Call yourself a Christian? You'd better be proving it. At the back of our minds a voice is asking, "What did you do in the great pandemic?" Despite all the evidence to the contrary something in us sees God looking at us and finding us wanting, shaking his head over our uselessness, expecting great things from us and therefore disappointed in us. We beat ourselves up with thinking about our own shortcomings, our failures to act on our attachment to material things. We get so bound up in these things that we forget the reality of the God who loves us, who wants the best for us, who became human for us and who is with us now. Sometimes we have to face the fact

that we cannot take on all the world's problems. Moreover, we don't have to, because God does that for us. That is the core message of the incarnation, the light coming into the world—God became flesh and blood, one of us, Emmanuel, God with us. That loving God is not a cross headteacher shaking his head sadly over the paucity of gold stars on our sticker charts. He wants the best for each one of us and enables each of us to live life to the full; each of us in our own particular way, even in the midst of a pandemic.

This is a time to be kind to ourselves, as we would be to someone else who is feeling low. It's a time to look for the things that bring us joy and lighten our darkness, because you can be pretty sure that's where God is leading us.

When we find the things that lift our spirits, we are on the road to finding God. What gives you pleasure, even on the darkest and gloomiest of December days? A piece of music; a conversation with a neighbour; a Christmas card written by an old friend; a carol sung by a beautiful choir; a young child's enjoyment of a surprise gift your dog's or cat's antics; or a memory of something or someone we knew and loved?

One of the memories that is often stirred in me at this time of year is the school nativity play. These productions are a vision of sweet innocence if you are on the audience side, or a bit of a headache if you are on the other. The children are on edge, tired or tetchy because it's a tired and tetchy time of year. The adults are all on a short fuse, often with a cold or throat infection, and the silliest of children can drive their responsible adults to distraction: 'Put that trumpet to your lips, not in your ear or down your trousers...' Yet, sooner or later will come the moment when everything looks right, the baby is in the manger, the kings have their gifts ready, the angels are looking angelic, the shepherds wild and woolly—and for a precious minute or two something special sweeps through the school hall, something that can move us to tears, intensely memorable, a light in the darkness that we know is inextinguishable.

What is it? I think it's a combination of things: the vulnerability of those little children; the great wave of parental love that is coming from the audience; the pleasure that comes of working together; and that tableau at its heart, of God born as a tiny baby. It's a gift, a picture of their child which many parents will never forget.

It's when we see the best in people, when even the tough old teachers can realise how much they love their job, and what a privilege it is to be with human beings who are just setting out on life.

I wonder what your memories of joy are? What are the things that lift you out of your darkest places into a light and airy mountain top running with the herald to bring the good news?

“Break forth together with shouts of joy, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.” He has redeemed Chedgrave and Loddon, and Sisland and Hardley. He has brought light and joy into the darkest of times. He has renewed hope when all hope seemed lost. He has come to us as a tiny child and will not leave us. The word has become flesh he has made his home among us, and we can see his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Creed

We proclaim the Church's faith in Jesus Christ.

**We believe and declare that our Lord Jesus Christ,
The Son of God, is both divine and human.**

God, of the being of the Father,
The only Son from before time began;
Human from the being of his mother, born in the world;

**Fully God and fully human;
Human in both mind and body.**

As God he is equal to the Father,
As human he is less than the Father.

**Although he is both divine and human
He is not two beings but one Christ.**

One, not by turning God into flesh,
But by taking humanity into God;

**Truly one, not by mixing humanity with Godhead,
But by being one person.**

For as mind and body form one human being
So the one Christ is both divine and human.,



**The word became flesh and lived among us;
We have seen his glory,
The glory of the only Son from the Father,
Full of grace and truth.**

Prayers of Intercession

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Father, on this holy day your Son our Saviour was born in human flesh.
Renew your Church as the Body of Christ.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

On this holy day there was no room for your Son in the inn. Protect with your love those who have no home and all who live in poverty.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

On this holy day Mary, in the pain of labour, brought your Son to birth.
Hold in your hand all who are in pain or distress.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

On this holy day your Christ came as a light shining in the darkness. Bring comfort to all who suffer in the sadness of our world.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

On this holy day the angels sang, 'Peace to God's people on earth.'
Strengthen those who work for peace and justice in all the world.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

On this holy day shepherds in the field heard good tidings of joy. Give us grace to preach the gospel of Christ's redemption.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

On this holy day strangers found the Holy Family, and saw the baby lying in the manger. Bless our homes and all whom we love.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

On this holy day heaven is come down to earth, and earth is raised to heaven. Hold in your hand all those who have passed through death in the hope of your coming kingdom.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

On this holy day Christians the world over celebrate Christ's birth. Open our hearts that he may be born in us today.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

Father, on this holy day angels and shepherds worshipped at the manger throne. Receive the worship we offer in fellowship with Mary, Joseph and the saints through him who is your Word made flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Peace

The President introduces the peace.

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you.

Let us share that peace with one another.

♪♪ Hymn: Of the Father's Love Begotten

**Of the Father's love begotten,
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega;
He the source, the ending he,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore.**

**By his word was all created;
He commanded; it was done:
Heaven and earth and depth of ocean,
Universe of three in one,
All that grows beneath the shining
Of the light of moon and sun,
Evermore and evermore.**

**Blessed was that day for ever
When the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bore the Saviour of our race,**

**And the child, the world's redeemer,
First revealed his sacred face,
Evermore and evermore.**

**Glory be to God the Father,
Glory be to God the Son,
Glory to the Holy Spirit,
Persons three, yet Godhead one.
Glory be from all creation
While eternal ages run,
Evermore and evermore.**

Word made flesh, life of the world, in your incarnation you embraced our poverty: by your Spirit may we share in your riches. **Amen.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Remembrance

The Lord is here. **His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.



All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty creator, ever-living God. We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who for love of our fallen race humbled himself, and was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit, and lived as one of us.

In this mystery of the Word made flesh you have caused his light to shine in our hearts, to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

In him we see our God made visible and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see. Therefore with all the angels of heaven we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name and say our joyful hymn of praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!**

We praise and bless you, loving Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; and as we obey his command, send your Holy Spirit, that broken bread and wine outpoured may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends and, taking bread, he praised you. He broke the bread, gave it to them and said: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine. Again he praised you, gave it to them and said: Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did, in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross. Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation, we proclaim his death and resurrection until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

Lord of all life, help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth. Look with favour on your people, gather us in your loving arms and bring us with all the saints to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father, for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Communion

The president breaks the consecrated bread

We break the bread of life, and that life is the light of the world.

**God here among us, light in the midst of us,
bring us to light and life.**

Christ is the true bread which has come down from heaven.
Lord, give us this bread always.

Prayers after Communion

God our Father, whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem: may the light of faith illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

**We thank you, Lord that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly
banquet prepared for all peoples. Amen.**

♪♪ Recessional Hymn: O Come All Ye 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!**

**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...

Child, for us sinners
Poor and in the manger,
Fain we embrace thee, with awe and love;
Who would not love thee,
Loving us so dearly?

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...

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesu, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:

O come, let us adore him...



Blessing

May the Father, who has loved the eternal Son from before the foundation of the world, shed that love upon you his children. **Amen.**

May Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with joy and peace. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit, by whose overshadowing Mary became the God-bearer, give you grace to carry the good news of Christ. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Depart

We go into the world to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love and to reflect God's glory.
Alleluia, alleluia. Amen.

