

NAURC @ Ipswich Road
CHRISTMAS DAY 2021
Worship for all ages
Led by Revd John Potter

Gathering songs: [Ring out the bells](#)
[Joy has dawned upon the earth](#)

Welcome and notices

Lighting the final advent candle

Advent candle liturgy

A candle burns,
the sign of your presence.
God amongst us, born as one of us,
may we live in the light of your presence,
the Light who gives life to all.

Christmas responses (*Hay and Stardust adapted*)

A child is born, a child to save us
***We share the good news with great joy:
Happy Christmas!***

A child is born, a child to challenge us
***We share the good news with great joy:
Happy Christmas!***

A child is born, a child for the world
We share the good news

Carol: [O come all ye faithful](#) (all the verses)

Opening prayers (*Shine on, adapted*)

Let us give thanks to God for the light has come:
a light shining in a stable, a light which shines in every place, the light of
eternal love.

Let us give thanks to God for the truth has come:
truth that challenges the proud, truth that lifts up the lowly, truth that brings justice
and hope.

Let us give thanks to God for the life has come:

the life of God in a new born child, life vulnerable and precious, life which conquers death's power, the new life of the Kingdom of God, life in all its fullness.

Let us give thanks to God for the wonderful advisor come:
not and earthly ruler like a king or a queen or a president
this is Jesus who brings peace, who brings healing, who shares our weakness,
a one whose name is Emmanuel: God with us.
Jesus Christ, whose coming sets us free, let your light shine in us, your truth change
us, your life renew us, that we may worship you as the Holy Child of Christmas;
God's only Son.

Carol: [Hark the herald angels sing](#)

The Christmas story (interactive)

Show and tell presents

Carol: [Go, tell it on the mountain](#) (WLV version)

Reflecting on the Christmas story: Signs of the times

“Merry Christmas”



> I just love all the decorations that are put up at this time of year, especially all the lights that brighten up the long nights.

> The ones in the city, especially the light tunnel are great – and there are several houses with remarkable displays too, especially a couple on Tuckswood.

> Some have signs light up as well and that got me thinking about and the signs we see at Christmas time so I went walkabout with my camera for this reflection time.

Scary soldier



> The first isn't a sign, but it is a 'sign of the times' of the first Christmas. I think the toy soldiers come from the "Nutcracker" ballet which is popular at this time of year. Personally, I found this one by the Christmas tree in the forum rather scary. What do you think?

> It reminded me that when Jesus was born the whole of what we know of as the Holy Land was under Roman military occupation and there were plenty of scary soldiers in red about the place. It was neither safe, nor peaceful.

By order



> Talking of Romans – as we are told in the Bible text the Roman Emperor; Caesar Augustus ordered that a census be taken mainly so that everyone was counted for tax purposes – and this sign seemed so appropriate.

> It's actually a sign of our times reminding people going into the 'Film and TV shop' in the city to wear a face mask!

> Anyway, by order of the Empire - the Roman one, Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem. This was the birth place of the great King David – and Joseph was a distant relative – so Jesus had royal lineage.

> But Jesus destined to be even greater than King David as was foretold:

“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.” (Is 9: 6&7)

Entrance



> We simply don't know if Joseph had sent a message ahead to arrange somewhere to stay, but as part of the lineage of David I think he would have been expecting a warm cosy welcome in the pub or inn – just like this inviting looking one in the city.

Welcome – closed



> But the traditional story goes that all the accommodation was full – all the 'welcome' signs were accompanied by 'closed' or something similar.

Sold out



- > We imagine a scene like all the cities or town we are used to with hotels, B&B inns that sort of thing – like the joke there would have been plenty of room if that hadn't turned up at Christmas! So this sign, that was actually beside Santa's Grotto says it all – 'sold out'.
- > There is a certain pathos in finding out that Santa is so popular he sold out and that the characters in the original Christmas story struggled to find anywhere to stay because there wasn't any room for them!

Welcome mat

- > It's a traditional part of the Christmas story that Mary and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem to find the place packed-out with people and, as the Bible tells us, there was 'no room in the inn.'
- > Last month when I was away on retreat, I had a huge surprise because after 14 years as a minister and telling people about Mary and Joseph having to settle down in a stable for the birth of Jesus that I actually had this all wrong.
- > I have been reading a book about the Middle Eastern setting of Jesus and discovered firstly that there weren't such things as 'Inns' as we know them in towns at the time – so no inn to be found.
- > Now that leaves us with a problem – is there was no inn or hotel or the like where does that leave the Bible passage "there was no room at the inn"?
- > The answer to that one I found in several different places – the English translation to 'inn' is a mis-translation.
- > The original Greek describes a guest room in a house and was that which was full.
- > So, in all probability, Mary and Joseph were welcomed into the one large room that a family lived in. What's more, at night their animals were brought in from the courtyard to settle down at one end of the room for safety – and also to add a bit or warmth.
- > And this is where the manger comes from – every house would have had one and according to one of Dannie's archaeology lecturers -mangers were a common piece of household furniture that had many different functions – including the place where the baby was put.

Home of Christmas



> So, in fact, the Christmas story is far more like a warm welcome to share with a family! And the birth of Jesus was in a family home and just like many other working-class births of the day.

> Apparently it's also unlikely that Joseph would have been there for the birth as the men got thrown out and the women would have gathered to help Mary.

Santa stop



> As well as the secular 'Santa stop' – because who doesn't like giving and receiving presents – a challenge in the light of this new learning is for us to have a 'Jesus stop' and put out our welcome mat – to be ready to welcome Jesus into our homes – for Mary and Joseph to be our house guests.

> This clearly won't be the case literally, but the challenge is to remember that it is the presence of Jesus that is most important at Christmas – and even presents come second.

Believe



> Our last sign – need I say more – believing that Jesus is God’s Son is the heart of Christmas.

Prayers of concern (*Hay and Stardust, adapted*)

(a child, or family, or adult to bring a candle forward and place around the crib with each section)

Jesus, born on Christmas Day
you are the light of the world.
Shine where the world needs light
places where there are wars
and where people hurt each other.
Lord, in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Jesus, born on Christmas Day
you are the light of the world.
Help our leaders to know how to run this country and this city so that everybody's
needs are met, especially those who are suffering.
Lord, in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Jesus, born on Christmas Day
you are the light of the world.
Shine to brighten the places where people are ill or sad.
Please bring help and healing especially to

... Lord, in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Jesus, born on Christmas Day
we are your lights in the world.
Help us to be prepared to show people your light by loving them.
Lord, in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Lord Jesus,
we are your lights in the world.
Help us to be prepared to put the needs of others before our own needs for your
sake.
Lord, in your mercy HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Lord Jesus,
we are your lights in the world.
Help us to be prepared
to look out for you
and listen out for you
so we can follow you in everything we do.
Lord, in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.
AMEN

Carol: [Joy to the world](#)

The blessing