

Sunday December 19th 2021: The fourth Sunday in Advent

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or other suitable time.



As we sing (or say) this first song, we light the fourth of our Advent candles:

Hymn StF 166

*'Christmas is coming!' / The Church is glad to sing,
and let the advent candles / brightly burn in a ring.*

The fourth is for the Virgin / who mothered God's own son
and sang how God's justice / was meant for everyone.

John L Bell (b 1949) CCL no. 5365402



Old Testament Reading set for today: Micah 5 v 2 – 5a

To think about

How important is it, do you think, that the location of Bethlehem as the birthplace of a Saviour was prophesied hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus?

Cecil Frances Alexander, who wrote the next hymn, was the wife of a Bishop who wrote hymns for children to explain aspects of the creed. She wrote 'All things bright and beautiful' to illustrate the first chapter of Genesis and 'There was a green hill far away' to explain the crucifixion. 'Once in royal David's city' was her hymn for the incarnation and for the fulfilment of the OT prophecies.

Hymn StF 214 H&P 114

Once in royal David's city / stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby / in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild / Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven / who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable / and his cradle was a stall;
with the needy, poor and lowly / lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And our eyes at last shall see him / through his own redeeming love,
for that child so dear and gentle / is our Lord in heaven above;
and he leads his children on / to the place where he is gone.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818 – 1895)

Gospel Reading set for today: Luke 1 v 39 – 46

Message from a Circuit friend

Sometimes, the work of a Health Visitor in East London can be very difficult. It can involve support for grieving families. One day, one of these health care professionals was required to support a mother whose baby had died. The family's pastor who arrived during the visit prayed with the grieving parents and prophesied that they would soon have twins. And so it came to pass that, twelve months later, a new birth visit was added to the nurse's diary, to the same parents who had so tragically lost their first-born. She attended them and was staggered that the mother had indeed brought forth healthy twin babies, just as the pastor had said.

In the Bible, on occasions, there are accounts of miraculous events surrounding births. Those of Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samson, and Samuel involve either the opening of a closed womb or the overcoming of a threat, showing that these individuals, who continue the promised line or provide rescue for the people of God, are not the result of human efforts, but of divine initiative.

Elizabeth, in her old age, was going to have a child, John the Baptist. Her relative, Mary, was about to give birth to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, even though she was a virgin and had no

relations with Joseph. An old woman and a young girl barely into her teens provide mutual support, which would also be applauded today. Throughout His dealings with His people, our God has never been afraid to work miraculously to achieve His purposes and give His people Hope. It is this hope that we need to share in our communities and our World today.

Douglas Harrison (Local Preacher and member of Garvestone Methodist Church)

Hymn StF 193 H&P 95

Born in the night, Mary's Child, a long way from your home;
coming in need, Mary's Child, born in a borrowed room.

Clear shining light, Mary's Child, your face lights up our way;
light of the world, Mary's Child, dawn on our darkened day.

Truth of our life, Mary's Child, you tell us God is good;
prove it is true, Mary's Child, go to your cross of wood.

Hope of the world, Mary's Child, you're coming soon to reign;
King of the earth, Mary's Child, walk in our streets again.

Geoffrey Ainger (b 1925) CCL no. 5365402



Prayers of Intercession

We pray for our world, our country, our communities, our churches, our neighbours, our families and our friends as we approach Christmas.

We pray for all those dealing with the pandemic, for all those who have to make difficult decisions, for all those who have contracted covid, for all those who are separated from their loved ones.

We pray for all those who are expecting babies before the end of the month and for all those who are giving them medical care. We pray for new babies and for their parents and wider families.

We pray for everyone without hope, asking that they may know something of the God of miracles..

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

Hymn StF 186 H&P 86 *(Mary's song after meeting up with her cousin Elizabeth)*

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! / Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word / in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name! / Make known his might, the deeds his arms has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same / his holy name – the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might! / Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight / the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word! / Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord / to children's children and for evermore!

Timothy Dudley-Smith (1926 - CCL nos. 168415, 495683, 102550, 962013

May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.

Extra Handout

The fourth handout with short readings from Luke 1 and 2, and something to think about each day, is available for this coming week. When you have finished the reading scheme, look back at the highlighted characters in all the readings. Think about everyone who was involved in the timeless story of the Saviour's birth – and the preparation for it.

Circuit News

There are Worship at Home sheets for Christmas Day and Boxing Day. We have online services at 7 pm on Christmas Eve (Communion) and on Boxing Day at 11.15 am. Contact us for the link.