



Order of Service and Content

Advent Service held 12th December 2020




'He Comes, He is Revealed'

By Growing Old Gracefully, with The Briery

1. Introduction from The Briery - the Sisters in their Chapel

Sr Anne and Sr Susan from The Briery Retreat Centre introduced the service with a video from the setting of The Briery Chapel, showing us their decorations and explaining the background, including the crib and the Jesse Tree.

2. Hymn: 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel'

The link below takes you to the video we used for this Advent Hymn, sung beautifully and set to images of various exquisite stained glass windows, together with the lyrics.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4Q_Q-4&list=RDpJjyY2R_lck&index=3

3. Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40: 25-31

"To whom can you compare me, or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

Lift your eyes and look: he who created these things leads out their army in order, summoning each of them by name. So mighty is his power, so great his strength, that not one fails to answer.

How can you say, Jacob, how can you repeat, Israel, 'My way is hidden from Yahweh, my rights are ignored by my God'?

Did you not know? Had you not heard? Yahweh is the everlasting God; he created the remotest parts of the earth. He does not grow tired or weary, his understanding is beyond fathoming.

He gives strength to the weary, he strengthens the powerless.

Youths grow tired and weary, the young stumble and fall,

but those who hope in Yahweh will regain their strength,
they will sprout wings like eagles,
though they run they will not grow weary,
though they walk they will never tire."

Isaiah 40: 25-31

4. **Video 'One Little Candle' sung by Nursery children**

We watched an Advent Video of some Nursery children singing a song 'One Little Candle' which was kindly provided for us by the Diocese of Leeds Music Service/Schools Service.

5. **The Visitation – Introductory Reflection and Scripture Reading Luke 1: 39-56**, by Pippa Bonner.

'In this coronavirus Advent some things are different, and some the same. We look forward with hope to the Birth of Christ, but perhaps this year as well as joyful expectation we recognise some of the upheaval and isolation for us and, perhaps, for some of those in the Advent Story. The Story starts with the Annunciation when Mary agrees to conceive Jesus, followed by Mary's visit to her older relative Elizabeth who is expecting John (later known as the Baptist). Elizabeth is much older than most mothers. Zechariah has been rendered dumb at this time of an unexpected pregnancy. Mary's unique conception will have been misunderstood, initially by Joseph and then all around her. So this is a wonderful story of inspired, graced mutual support amidst personal upheaval and possible isolation. The Magnificat, spoken by Mary, foretells the amazing Good News of a God who turns everything upside down, where ultimately the poor will be fed, social justice prevails, and God's love is eternal. A wonderful message of hope!'

Luke 1: 39-56

"Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.' And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him. He has used the power of his arm, he has routed the arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love -according to the promise he made to our ancestors -- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever. "

6. **He is Revealed – Reading of 'Peeling off the whitewash' by Daniel O'Leary**

Chosen and read by Ann West.

'There is a story told in Holland about an old church. For many years, all those on entering, would stop and bow in the direction of a whitewashed wall. No one knew exactly why anyone did that, but everyone had been doing it for such a long time that nobody questioned the habit. It was tradition. It felt right.

One day the parish decided to renovate the church. Among other things they began to strip the paint off the old walls. While doing this they discovered traces of a painting under the whitewash on the wall, towards which everyone always bowed. Very carefully they continued peeling, so as not to damage the painting underneath.

Slowly there emerged a very beautiful centuries old painting of Christ. Nobody was old enough to have actually seen it. It had been whitewashed over for at least a few centuries. Yet everyone had been bowing to it, not knowing why, but sensing there was some good reason for the reverence.

Gradually the story was recovered. Everyone was now interested in the whole revelation. Eventually they came to know who painted the picture, why it was painted, what it meant. They bowed now with a new reverence, joy and meaning.

There is a Christmas lesson for all of us in that story- a message about how we forget the reason for the fuss we make about this week's holidays and festivities. We build the crib, put up the tree, string the lights, play the old hymns, gather the families, write the cards, send presents, and maybe even go to church. But like the people in Holland, most of us are not clear anymore about why we are excited this week. According to a leading Christmas card manufacturer, only 3 out of their current 900 cards carry any reference in print or symbol, to Christ. There is very little conscious faith left in our perennial celebration, just a habitual response to a tradition. We are bowing to a whitewashed wall, not knowing why.

Yet all is not lost. Maybe it is better to come to church at Christmas than not at all; to celebrate the season even in a purely secular manner, than not to celebrate it ever; to settle for the vague connection many make between Christmas, and something really important that happened to our world 2000 years ago, when the world is frightened, desperate for salvation and peace, someone, somewhere will remember the beautiful painting – and begin, again, to peel off the commercial whitewash.

7. The Meaning behind the Twelve Days of Christmas

Rachel Walker read about one explanation of the meaning behind the popular song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'.

'During the 16th and 17th centuries, Roman Catholics in this country were not allowed to practice their faith openly. It is said that in order to avoid suspicion, 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' was written as a kind of coded list of key doctrines to keep the children's beliefs alive, but in secret, as can be seen from this diagram:

12 The Hidden Meaning of the Days of Christmas

<p>December 25 </p> <p>A Partridge in a Pear Tree <i>The One true God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ</i></p>	<p>December 26 </p> <p>Two Turtle doves <i>The Old and New Testaments</i></p>	<p>December 27 </p> <p>Three French hens <i>Faith, Hope and Love</i></p>
<p>December 28 </p> <p>The Four Calling Birds <i>Four Gospels</i></p>	<p>December 29 </p> <p>The Five Gold Rings <i>Recall the Torah (Law) the First Five Books of the Old Testament</i></p>	<p>December 30 </p> <p>Six Geese A-Laying <i>Six Days of Creation</i></p>



Image taken from www.courageouschristianfather.com/the-12-days-of-christmas/

8. Hymn 'God is Love , His the Care'

We watched a video of a composite recording of the Diocesan Children's Choirs, which was put together during lockdown. You can see the video on the link below:

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

9. 'The Gift of Hope' a prayer by Joyce Rupp

Leader: God of all those who yearn for a glimmer of assurance on the long journey home to you, come! Come with a vast storehouse of renewed dreams, hopes, and peacefulness.

God of hope, come! Enter into my memory and remind me often of the yearning of the people of history. Stir up stories of how the ancestors hung on to your promises, how they stole from tiny glimmers about you, passed on from age to age. Help me to hear the loud, crying voices of the prophets who proclaimed that a new age would dawn.

God of hope, come! Enter into this heart of mine which often loses itself in self, missing the message of your encouragement because I am so entangled in the web of my own whirl of life. Enable me to not lose sight of the power of your presence or the truth of your consolation.

God of hope, come! Enter into the lives of those I hold dear, the ones whose lives are marked with pain, struggle, and deep anxiety, those whose lives bear ongoing heartaches, those whose difficulties threaten to overwhelm them with helplessness and despair. Come and gift them with a deep belief about you and your never-ending faithfulness and companionship.

God of hope, come! Enter into every human heart that cries out for a glimpse of your love, for a sign of your welcoming presence, for a taste of your happiness. Be the one who calms the restless and gentles the ache of the human journey.

God of hope, come! Enter into this Advent season with the grace of joy and laughter. Fill faces with smiles of delight and voices with sounds of pleasure. Let this gift come from deep within. Replenish all with the joyful blessings that only your peace can bring.

God of hope, come! Be the Morning Star in our midst, the Light that can never go out, the Beacon of Hope guiding our way to you. Come into our midst and make of our lives a home, where your everlasting goodness resonates with assuring love and vigorous hope.

(Joyce Rupp, Out of the Ordinary, p. 24; 1999)

10. An Advent Blessing, based on St Patrick's Breastplate

Chosen by Mgr Peter Rosser

*During this Advent season
May God the Father of us all bless us with the
Strength from heaven
Light of the Sun
Splendour of fire
Swiftness of wind
Depth of sea
Stability of the Earth
And Firmness of Rock*

*During this Advent season
May Christ, the Son of God, bless us with
His strength to pilot us
His might to uphold us
His wisdom to guard and shield us
against all wounding
from afar or near
alone or in a multitude*

*During this Advent season
May the eternally outpoured Spirit of God
Bless us with renewed hope in the Advent promise,
with lively joy in the knowledge of Christ's presence among us,
and with enlarged love for those
who reveal that presence to us
in this time of waiting.*

Amen.

