



## Sunday 20 December 2020

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [Sussex carol](#)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

## The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

A voice cries out in the wilderness ‘Make straight the way of the Lord’.

So let us listen, and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith,  
firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments  
and to live in love and peace with all.

**All** Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name.  
**Amen.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

It's usual to omit the Gloria during Advent.

## **The Collect for The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Eternal God,  
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,  
so we wait for his coming in glory;  
bring us through the birth pangs of this present age  
to see, with her, our great salvation  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

## **First reading**

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'See now, I am

living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.’ Nathan said to the king, ‘Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you.’

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord, ‘Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’ Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David, “Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

‘“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever”.’ *2 Samuel 7:1-16*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## **Second reading**

A reading from St Paul’s Letter to the Romans

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to

bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen. *Romans 16:25–27*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 In dulci jubilo**

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## **Gospel reading**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.'

Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her. *Luke 1:26–38*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## **Sermon**

Today is our last Sunday before Christmas. Our readings speak about the preparations that God made for Jesus to be born among us, as one of us.

Imagine, if it's possible, a thirteen-year-old girl (maybe fifteen, tops) is confronted by an angel who says God has chosen her to be the mother of his only begotten son.

(The 'sixth month' at the beginning of the passage refers to the story just before this incident, in which St Luke tells us about an old couple named Zechariah and Elizabeth (who were unable to have children) and how God chose them to be the parents of John the Baptist.)

This Elizabeth is Mary's cousin. Luke tells us about a messenger Gabriel, who appears to Mary in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy to tell her that she will bear a son. His life will tell us that God wants to live among and be with his people in a new and extraordinary way. Mary is reminded by the messenger that her elderly relative, well past the age of bearing children, is going to be a mother also. 'With God nothing will be impossible.' From the very start, there's a connection, a bond, between Elizabeth and Mary and between John the Baptist and Jesus.

We've all heard this Christmas story before. In fact we've heard it so many times that its novelty has long since faded away, and we lose sight of the awesomeness of this event—that God would enter human life with all its violence and corruption, to bring us hope, to rescue us from our sinfulness, to send us Jesus our deliverer.

Because of the current, ongoing situation, and what seem like ever changing rules and restrictions, this Christmas will be a different kind of Christmas.

Some families will be separated, some people will be forced to celebrate alone in isolation, some families will be missing loved ones they lost this year. People have and are still struggling financially; it might not feel like Christmas at all when you don't have a job, can't provide for your family. This year, places will be empty, traditions will be different, celebration will be diminished, joyfulness will be a little quieter, the warm glow a little less bright.

If there has ever been a Christmas when we need to remember—that God loves us, God gave his Son for us, Jesus came to be born among us—if there was a Christmas we need to remember that nothing will be impossible with God, it's this Christmas.

Mary knew that the blessing comes within the relationship. Mary knew that nothing means anything outside fellowship with God. She could have said 'no' and rejected God's invitation. It could have passed to some other girl. But it didn't.

In a great leap of faith and trust in the angel's message, Mary gives an unequivocal, unconditional 'Yes', by saying, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' She had yet to learn what that 'Yes' would involve but it was made unconditionally, and it was never withdrawn.

She never withdrew that 'Yes' through a life of trials and tribulations (of which we know surely a mere fraction) right up to those terrible moments as she stood beneath the Cross and saw her only Son die in agony and shame as a public criminal.

There is clearly a message there for us. We too have been called in our own special

way to give birth to Jesus in our lives and in our environment. We too have been called to say 'Yes', an unconditional 'Yes' to following Jesus. Now, as we approach the celebration of Christmas, is the time for us to renew that pledge with Mary's help and example.

Because maybe, just maybe, Mary knew that what makes Christmas 'Christmas' is God's desire to enter into the lives of ordinary people, and the willingness and openness of ordinary people to let God in. Of course, I'm sure she understood this in her own Hebrew way.

As we celebrate this Christmas that will be a different kind of Christmas for us all, I wonder if we can grasp hold of how different that first Christmas was. I wonder can we understand, just a little, the magnitude of the impact Gabriel's message had on Mary's future, and the magnitude of the impact it has on ours today. I wonder can we understand, just a little, what it took for Mary to commit to the path she chose. I wonder can we comprehend the enormity of the commitment she made. I wonder can we follow her lead, even if in a small way.

I wonder. I hope we can. In light of the events of this year and the years ahead, I hope we can. In Jesus name. Amen

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

## Prayers of intercession

Celebrant: As we approach the celebration of the birth of our Saviour, let us turn our hearts and minds to the Father, with confidence in his generous love and mercy:

That the Church will faithfully proclaim the Word of God to every part of the world, we pray to the Lord ...

**All Amen. We pray to the Lord.**

That Government leaders will be responsive to the needs of their people, especially families with young children, we pray to the Lord...

**All Amen. We pray to the Lord.**

That all who are pregnant and afraid may welcome the life within them, and draw strength from the angel Gabriel's words to Mary: Do not fear, we pray to the Lord ...

**All Amen. We pray to the Lord.**

That the poor, the lonely, and the neglected will experience God's love during this joyful season through the kindness of others, we pray to the Lord ...

**All Amen. We pray to the Lord.**

That all who are busy making preparations to celebrate Christmas will take time to reflect on God's love for them, we pray to the Lord ...

**All Amen. We pray to the Lord.**

For those who have died, that as they shared our Christmas joy on earth, they may come to enjoy eternal glory in God's kingdom, we pray to the Lord ...

**All Amen. We pray to the Lord.**

Almighty God, prepare our hearts with your grace, that like Mary, we may be a worthy dwelling place for your Son. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**All Amen.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## The peace

In the tender mercy of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
to shine on those who dwell in darkness  
and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 The angel Gabriel**

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

May God the Father, judge all-merciful,  
make us worthy of a place in his kingdom.

**All Amen**

May God the Son, coming among us in power,  
reveal in our midst the promise of his glory.

**All Amen**

May God the Holy Spirit make us steadfast in faith,  
joyful in hope and constant in love.

**All Amen**

And the blessing of God the Almighty:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

be with you now and remain with you always

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 Tell out my soul**

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ. Amen.**

# The Liturgy of the Sacrament

## Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

Father, you made the world and love your creation.

You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.

His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.

And so we gladly thank you,

with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All 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:

**All 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.

**All Amen.**



## The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.**

## Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,

and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All**    **We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us.  
Amen.**

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Heavenly Father,  
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary  
to be the mother of the promised saviour:  
fill us your servants with your grace,  
that in all things we may embrace your holy will  
and with her rejoice in your salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All**    **Amen**

**All**    **Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out  
in the power of your Spirit**

**to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.**