

-Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 20th December

**This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you
by Canon Julia Francis.**

Heavenly Father, who chose the Virgin Mary, full of grace, to be the mother of our Lord and Saviour; fill us with your grace that in all things we may accept your Holy will, and with her rejoice in your salvation.

Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Amen

In churches at this time an Advent candle will be lit on a wreath amongst the first three advent candles. It will very likely be pale pink to recall Mary. If you are at home perhaps you have a candle of any kind to light too as we say these words.

The Advent Crown reminds us of the coming of Jesus, Light of the World.

We light this Candle to remind us of Mother Mary. Who answered in obedience to the Will of God.

The Holly and the Ivy are dancing in a ring, round the berry bright red candles and the white and shining King.

Let us call to mind those times of which we are ashamed or fall short of our purpose and desire to be better than we are.

Eternal God you call us, as you called the maiden Mary, to trust your promises and obey your will, yet we too often go our own way. We confess our failures and ask you to forgive us. Increase our faith in your word and our confidence to let you lead us in our lives.

Amen

**Father God, have mercy. Jesus have mercy. Spirit Lord have Mercy.
Amen.**

Almighty God whose Mercy is on all who trust in him, and forgives our wrongdoings increase in us the will to walk in your ways.

Amen.

Hymn: People look East.

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 **People look East. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People look East, and sing today:
Love the Guest is on the way.**

- 2 **Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People look East, and sing today:
Love the Rose is on the way.**

- 3 **Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather,
Bright as sun and moon together.
People look East, and sing today:
Love the Star is on the way.**

- 4 **Angels announce to man and beast
Him who cometh from the East.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the Word, the Lord is coming.
People look East, and sing today:
Love the Lord is on the way.**

Eleanor Farjeon

Micah 5:2-5

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.'

Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labour bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

And he will be our peace when the Assyrians invade our land and march through our fortresses. We will raise against them seven shepherds, even eight commanders.

St. Luke 1:26-38

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.'

'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.'

Then the angel left her.

Hymn: It came upon the Midnight Clear

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 **It came upon the midnight clear,**
 that glorious song of old,
 from angels bending near the earth
 to touch their harps of gold:
 ‘Peace on the earth, good will to men,
 from heaven’s all-gracious King!’
 The world in solemn stillness lay
 to hear the angels sing.
- 2 **Still through the cloven skies they come,**
 with peaceful wings unfurled;
 and still their heavenly music floats
 o'er all the weary world;
 above its sad and lowly plains
 they bend on hovering wing;
 and ever o'er its Babel sounds
 the blessed angels sing.
- 3 **Yet with the woes of sin and strife**
 the world has suffered long;
 beneath the angel strain have rolled
 two thousand years of wrong;
 and, when at war, we fail to hear
 the love-song which they bring.
 O hush the noise that warfare brings,
 and hear the angels sing!
- 4 **For lo, the days are hastening on,**
 by prophets bards foretold,
 when with the ever-circling years
 comes round the age of gold;
 when peace shall over all the earth
 its ancient splendours fling
 and all the world give back the song
 which now the angels sing.

Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810–1876)

Reflection

Ask any newly expectant parent what they feel about the news they have received. It's a mixture of Love, Hope, Joy and the mad dash of preparation mingled with all the anxieties that begin to surface. Mary will have felt all these things. Each year we share in her story as we celebrate our own families and friendships.

Our season of Advent takes us through the preparation season as we look for ways to celebrate the Birth of Christ; to clean our hearts and homes and find the pathway to the Hope, Joy and Love surrounding not only that birth so long ago but our own expressions of those three wonders to those we love and all whom we can reach out to.

It was New Years day 2017, I rounded the corner at the top of the lane by our home and came across seven beautifully marked Red-Legged Partridges. I had to look them up to confirm the name, they are related to other Pheasant cousins, but look like an inland version of those lovely puffins we had watched from boat on trips at the coast.

It was late spring before we spotted just two which I referred to as 'brothers' nonchalantly walking around the place. Although visits were intermittent they had come down as far as our garden hedge by this time. Many months passed and we hadn't seen them again all through that year so feared they had all perished. .

On December 3rd 2017 it was Advent Sunday and as we were about to leave the house I noted four Red Legged Partridge scratching around beneath the oak tree just beyond our gate. I was encouraged to find the number had indeed increased to four. They took flight as soon as the car engine started, we then eased our way onto the lane. Imagine our immense joy, when 100 yards along the lane as we rounded the bend a spectacle before us of a dozen (yes 12) Red Legged Partridges flocked together. It was an immense satisfaction to see this evidence of multiplication

On arrival at church the candle was lit on the Advent ring and a prayer read for Hope. During the service we would sing the Hymn 'How Great Thou Art'. Verse 2 reads:

When through the woods and forest glades I wander, and hear
the birds sing sweetly in the trees. When I look up at lofty

mountain grandeur, and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze. Then sings my soul my saviour God to thee.....

It seemed to me the prayer for hope and the hymn added to my appreciation of the spectacle of the Red Legged Partridges that morning. This little group of birds, had given me hope. Since that time three years ago, the regular number of Red Legged Partridges as winter visitors to our garden has remained at a steady 8 or 9. I saw them again this morning as I made a pot of tea; They set off across the front lawn collecting seeds I had put down for our daily pair of blackbirds; Then the leader with the string following in fits and starts behind followed the perimeter of the beech hedge. Once at the rear of the house they head across beneath the now empty plum tree to the bird table. They know seeds fall down as smaller birds or the wind knocks the side of the feeder. So they pecked around here for a while. Then one by one they headed off for the gap into the field of sheep behind us.

Some mornings I disturb them in this part of the garden as I open the curtains. They give me great joy and I am reminded that untold creatures and birds surround me; hidden from view.

The natural world is giving us all hope this year; from our walks amongst the blossom trees and beneath the birdsong of spring; and to seeing the wonderful rainbows across our communities reflecting the promise of God in Genesis. How amazing it is, that a very secular world has adopted this biblical image. Yet, actually not so amazing is it, it is quite naturally the icon that we turn to when the going gets touch.

This year has been one in which many have needed Hope in their lives, but have felt that it has been elusiveHope revives our Joy and brings us to a place of Peace in our hearts.

I hope that in your homes you will set a candle on your table this week in the run up to Christmas and in your window.

Sharing the Joy of the Light of the World who comes to bring us hope and promise for the future.

May it stand for the love you shared with all whom have been lost to you this year, and for the love you share with those from whom you have been separated through the lockdowns and the shielding . Stay safe and keep looking out at your neighbours homes.

Pray for them; for yourselves; for your family and especially for the children and young people; This is such a bewildering time. Yet history tells us we shall come through and we shall be together once again.

Maranatha. Come Lord Jesus.

(the almost final words of Revelation followed by this abiding phrase)

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Intercessions -- a litany for Advent.

We come before Christ our Saviour with our prayers,
Jesus Light of the World
Shine in the darkness ,we pray.

In a year which has seen a worldwide pandemic and much that has overturned all we took for granted, let us remember that in addition to our biddings here, Covid 19 and the restrictions of 2020 has increased the difficulties for all whom we pray for; and especially under these following headings.

We pray for those who suffer; through homelessness, unemployment. For the vast number of refugees, those without enough food or medical aid. We pray for all in medical research and those who have responded to this year of increased pressures.

May the governments of the world seek reconciliation, peace and justice; that here on earth your kingdom may come indeed.

May they know your eternal welcome.

Jesus Light of the world

Shine in the darkness, we pray.

We pray for all who live loss of earnings, and distress of many kinds.

Those persecuted, dealt with unjustly and outcast.

Help them to know the victory of the cross is their inheritance.

We pray for all in authority.

Those who have responsibility for the lives of others.

Help them to show compassion to the helpless and the vulnerable. Turn their hearts Lord to see the greatness of the kingdom of your Son.

Jesus Light of the world

Shine in the darkness, we pray.

We pray for the friendless, lonely and those in despair.
May they be sought out and given courage and comfort.
Help them to find through knowing your love, the faithful friend who will always be beside them.

Jesus Light of the world

Shine in the darkness, we pray.

We pray for all who are at this time ill, in body , mind or in spirit.
Bring to them your healing touch in their lives. Especially we pray for all in hospital, and those who are anxious today for their loved ones. Be close to those who are even now drawing closer to your everlasting embrace. Be with those we grieve and all who mourn..

Jesus Light of the world

Shine in the darkness, we pray

We pray for ourselves that we may share the light of your presence with everyone we meet.

For all with whom we share our lives in whatever place we are in company of others or respecting the safe space of those around us. Enable us to shine out with the radiance that we know shines within us, through your Son's love.

Help us as we draw others into the brightness.

Jesus Light of the world

Shine in the darkness, we pray and reveal your glory throughout the world. Amen.

Let us pray with this reflection upon our Lord's Prayer.

Father in Heaven, Your Kingdom Come.

Your will be done.

Your Son came to teach us the ways of the kingdom, may we hear the call to proclaim the good news joyful. Your Kingdom come.

Your will be done.

Your Son came to suffer for our sake and gave his life as a ransom for all ; may we hear the call to make sacrifices in our own lives. Your Kingdom come.

Your will be done.

You raised your son; defeating the powers of temptation and sin. May we hear your call to share his victory and live his risen life. Father in Heaven, your kingdom come.

Your will be done.

Our Father you have set before us the great hope that your kingdom shall come on earth, and have taught us to pray for its coming . Give us grace to discern the signs of its dawning, and to work for the perfect day when your will shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Hymn: Of the Father's Love begotten

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 **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.**

- 2 **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 the sun,
evermore and evermore.**

- 3 **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.**

4 **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**

Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348–c. 413)
translated by John Mason Neale (1811–1866)
and Henry Williams Baker (1821–1877)

The Blessing:

Lord you know about the lives of women, those ordinary handmaidens whose lowliness like Mary's you have regarded throughout all generations and call them blessed.

Bless us all we pray as we learn from the example of the Mother of your Son how to fashion our lives so that we do not feel any sacrifice in relinquishing self-will but only the glory of doing your will. Through our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all , now and evermore.

Amen.

