

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 13th December - the 3rd Sunday in Advent

This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by Rev Marian Jones.

Today, as we gather for worship, we are aware of those of you who, as yet, are not able to join the gathered community. You are the people of God where you are, and we join together to worship. Today's service reflects as closely as is possible, the service that will be held in Welshpool Methodist Church.

In church, the third candle of the Advent wreath will be lit.

Call to worship:

**The glory of the Lord shall be revealed
and all people shall see it.**

Hymn: On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

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

- 1 On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings from the King of kings!.
- 2 Then cleansed be every life from sin;
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.
- 3 For you are our salvation, Lord,
our refuge, and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away
like flowers that wither and decay.
- 4 To heal the sick stretch out your hand,
and bid the fallen sinner stand;
shine forth, and let your light restore
earth's own true loveliness once more.

5 To God the Son all glory be
whose advent sets his people free,
whom, with the Father, we adore,
and Holy Spirit, evermore.

John Chandler (1806–1876)

Opening Prayer:

God of all glory,
you brought the universe into existence,
and raised up witnesses
to your greatness and love.
We praise and adore you.
Grant that by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit
we may worship and serve you,
and praise your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession:

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.

Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations
into the peace of your kingdom:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You come in word and sacrament
to strengthen us in holiness:
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You will come in glory
with salvation for your people:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Declaration of God's forgiveness:

'I am making all things new,' says the Lord.

This is Christ's gracious word:

'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Prayer for today:

God for whom we wait and watch,
you sent your servant John the Baptist
to prepare your people for the coming of the Messiah.
Inspire the ministers and stewards of your truth
to turn our disobedient hearts to you;
that, when Christ shall come again in glory to be our judge,
we may stand with confidence before him,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end.
Amen.

An Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 61: 1 – 4, 8 - 11

To listen to the reading of this passage by David Suchett, from BibleGateway, in a new tab, press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

**The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has
anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.**

**He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for
the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim
the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to
comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to**

bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called- oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

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‘For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed.’

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the soil makes the young plant come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

A reading from the Gospel according to St John, Chapter 1: 6 – 8, 19 - 28

To listen to the reading of this passage by David Suchett, from BibleGateway, in a new tab, press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

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Now this was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, ‘I am not the Messiah.’

They asked him, ‘Then who are you? Are you Elijah?’

He said, ‘I am not.’

‘Are you the Prophet?’

He answered, ‘No.’

Finally they said, ‘Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, “Make straight the way for the Lord.”’

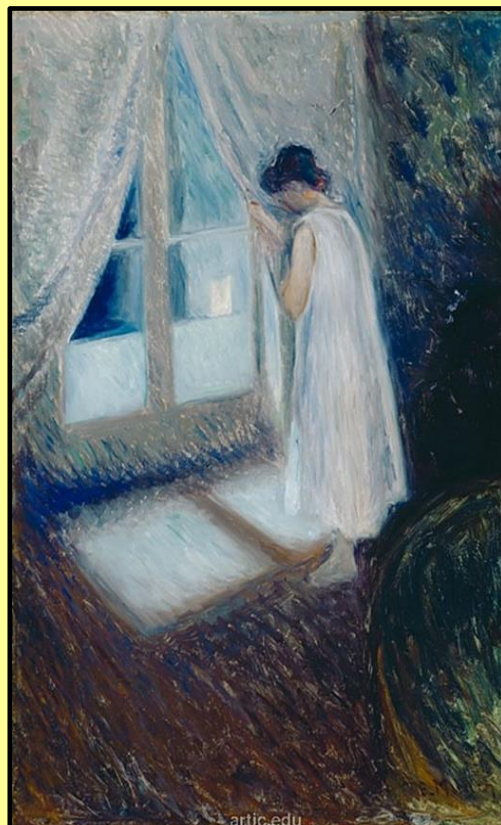
Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, ‘Why then do you baptise if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’

‘I baptise with water,’ John replied, ‘but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Reflection:

We’ve been doing a lot of waiting for good news! Waiting for good news about the reduction in infection numbers; waiting for good news about a vaccine; waiting for good news about meeting those we love at Christmas . . . we in the church should be used to waiting – not always patiently, sometimes ‘jumping the gun’ and missing out Advent in the rush to sing Christmas carols! Edvard Munch’s painting ‘Watching and Waiting’ has that sense of anticipation, yet the one for whom we wait is already with us, often unknown and unrecognised.



John the Baptist, in answer to a question, says: 'Among you stands one whom you do not know'.

Earlier this year, I planned to follow the journey my forbears made to Patagonia. Those early settlers left Wales in 1865 for a new and different life. The Argentinian Government had offered land, albeit as the settlers were to discover, very poor land for agriculture to anyone prepared to take up the challenge. Michael D Jones, a Congregationalist minister, wanted to protect the Welsh language and the isolation of Patagonia would protect the people who went there from outside influences.

Wanting to protect themselves from outside influences and return to the values of an unadulterated Jewish faith, a group of men gathered in Israel and formed themselves into an almost monastic community. The austere Essene community was created in Qumran, in the desert on the shores of the Dead Sea and it survived for about 250 years. They left the cities, believing themselves to be among the holy ones of Israel, preparing themselves for the battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. There are those who are convinced that John the Baptist became, for a while, a member of a community. 'He was not the light, but he came to testify to the light'.

He's a disturbing figure, John. There are reports of him standing in the desert like some roughly dressed hermit and quoting Isaiah, that prophet who some 700 years before had spoken words of comfort to Jewish refugees exiled in Babylon and given them a vision of a new and restored creation; Isaiah, who had spoken of another prophet who would come to be a voice crying in the wilderness. Here's John the Baptist saying: 'I am that voice!' as he urges the people to take stock, to repent and to be ready for the God who is about to reveal himself in a dramatically new and decisive way.

I've often wondered how much contact John the Baptist had with Jesus. Their mothers were cousins – did they meet up in Jerusalem when they attended the festivals in the Temple? Did John see Jesus as the carpenter's son from Nazareth? Was he taken aback to discover that 'the one who is coming after me' was none other than his relative, Jesus?

So many questions! We can recreate the scenes in our imagination.

Behind all the questions is that statement which says: Pay attention! Don't look at me. Look for the one you don't recognise yet. I'm just the one who is preparing the way for him.

Isn't that what we're about? Followers of Jesus, reflecting his life in our lives, preparing the way that others may recognise the one who is among us, whose birth we prepare to celebrate. I love that 'Waiting and Watching' painting. I was listening the other morning to an interview with the artist Tracey Emin, who is a great fan of Edvard Munch, and I realised that an artist is someone who takes us by the hand and invites us to look at the world through their eyes, to see what they see, to see how even the unlikeliest object is transformed when the light falls on it in a particular way.

Like an artist, John the Baptist invites us to look for Jesus of Nazareth, to look at him and listen to him. Come and see what the world looks like in the light of Christ and what God looks like; see how the unlikeliest people are transformed when that light falls on them.

Advent calendar windows are being opened and John prompts us to see beyond the baby to the adult, to Christ, the light of the world. In his light, all creation is transformed. That has to be good news!

Prayers of Intercession:

Let us pray.

In joyful expectation of his coming to reign

we pray to our Lord, saying,

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to your world as King of the nations.

We pray for . . .

Before you rulers will stand in silence.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to your Church as Lord and Judge.

We pray for . . .

**Help us to live in the light of your coming
and give us a longing to do your will.**

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to your people as Saviour and bearer of pain.

We pray for . . .

**Enfold us all in your love and mercy,
wipe away the tears of failure, fear and distress,
and set us free to serve you for ever.**

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

**Come to us from heaven with power and great glory,
and lift us up to meet you,
where with all your saints and angels,
we will live with you for ever.**

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Amen.

The Peace

**May the God of peace make us holy
and keep us free from every fault
as we wait in joyful hope
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The peace of the Lord be always with us.

In the silence, we call to mind those in need of God's peace

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

**God of all glory and light of our salvation,
we offer you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.**

**By your living Word
you called all things into being,
breathed into life the desire of your heart
and shaped us in your own likeness.**

**Though we rejected your love,
you did not give us up
or cease to fashion our salvation.**

**You made a covenant to be our God,
spoke to us through the prophets,
and prepared the way for our redemption.**

**We praise you that in the fullness of time
you sent your only Son Jesus Christ.**

**The Lord of eternity,
announced by angels and born of Mary,
he became incarnate,
fulfilling the promise of your salvation.**

**And so we offer our praise
with all your people, on earth and in heaven.**

**With the full chorus of your creation,
we proclaim the glory of your name:**

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

**We praise you, Lord God, King of the universe,
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who, on the night in which he was betrayed,
took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples,
saying,**

'Take this and eat it.

This is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.'

**In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and
gave it to them, saying,**

'Drink from it all of you.

This is my blood of the new Covenant,

poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come in glory.

He is Alpha and Omega,

the beginning and the end;

the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

**Generous and holy God,
pour out your Spirit
to refashion us in your image
that we may be found ready**

at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To him we offer our prayer :

Lord Jesus Christ, since I cannot now receive You in bread and wine, I humbly pray that You would come spiritually to my soul.

Silence may be kept

Come, Lord Jesus, come and cleanse me,

heal me, strengthen me

and unite me to Yourself,

now and for evermore.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy Name;

thy kingdom come;

thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

for ever and ever.

Amen.

Hymn: Come, thou long-expected Jesus

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

- 1 **Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.**

- 2 **Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.**

- 3 **Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.**

- 4 **By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.**

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

The Blessing:

**Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon us
and prepare our hearts and souls
to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be ours, now and always.**

Amen.