**Sunday Evening before Christmas Day**

**The Seventh in Our Advent Exploration dw**

**At Matawhero Historic Church**

**24th December, 2023 RE-BUILD**

**\*\*\* Welcome and Greeting** : We are led by : Jan Ewart [Elder ]

Our Reader is : Barabara Larsen.

**\*\*\* INTROIT**

[**https://youtu.be/urQEvMylD8g**](https://youtu.be/urQEvMylD8g)

*Played by Prof Ian Tracey, on the Copeman Hart Organ*

*At Mayflower Methodist Church,* ***Leicester, UK****.*

**Words & Music from *“ Leibster Jesu, wird sin Hier* ” BWV 731**

**by J.S.Bach (1685 – 1750)**

**Liebster Jesus, wir sind hier, Dearest Jesus, we are here,**

**um auf dich und dein Wort zu hören; to listen to You and Your word**

**Direkte Sinne und Verlangen Direct (our} senses and desires**

**zu den süßen Lehren des Himmels, to the sweet teachings of Heaven,**

**dass die Herzen der Erde that the hearts of the earth ( peoples )**

**um den ganzen Weg zu dir gezogen zu werden  ~~[to~~] be drawn all the way to You.**

**\*\*\*Our Call to Worship; Psalm 122: [adapted ©cbyates 2023] Good News trans..]**

**In Praise of the New Jerusalem.**

*L : I was glad when they said to me,*

*“Let us go to the LORD's house.”*

**All : We have all come here tonight, and now,**

**we stand within the gates of Jerusalem!**

**Jerusalem will be a city rebuilt and restored**

**to its former beauty, order, and harmony**.

*L : Here the people of the new Israel will meet.*

**All : They will give thanks to their  LORD**

**according to all His commandents.**

**Here, the true King of the New Israel**

**will judge judge all His people justly and fairly**.

*L : Pray for the peace of the New Jerusalem:*

*“… May those who love you prosper. …”*

**All : “… May there be peace inside your walls**

**and safety in all of Your places of assembly. …”**

**For the sake of my family and friends, and all who live within,**

**I say to Jerusalem, “… Peace be with you! …”**

**For the sake of the house of the LORD our God**

**We will pray for your continued prosperity. AMEN**

**\*\*\*1-PRAISE : CH-4 304 SA 35 [ O little Town]**

**O little town of Bethlehem**

**how still we see thee llie!**

**Above thy deep and dreamless sleep**

**the silent stars go by.**

**Yet in the dark streets shineth**

**the everlasting Light;**

**the hopes and fears of all the years**

**are met in Thee tonight.**

**O morning stars, together**

**proclaim the Holy birth!**

**And praises sing to God, the King**

**and ‘Peace to all’ on earth.**

**For Christ is born of Mary,**

**and gathered all above.**

**While mortals sleep, the Angels keep**

**their watch of wond’ring love.**

**How silently, how silently,**

**the wondrous gift is given.**

**So God imparts to human hearts**

**the Blessings of His heav’n.**

**No ear may hear His coming,**

**but in this world of sin,**

**where meek souls will receive Him, still**

**the dear child enters in**

**O Holy child of Bethlehem**

**descend to us we pray.**

**Cast out our sin, and enter in,**

**be born in us today !**

**We hear the Christmas Angels**

**the great ‘Glad Tidings’ tell**

**O come to us; abide wit us;**

**Our Lord, Immanuel.**

**\*\*\*Our Prayer of Approach, Seeking Assurance.***,*

*L : Let us pray … together … God , our Loving Creator;*

*God of Abraham and Sarah, of Mary and Joseph.*

*Now You call us who are here, on a journey of faith.*

**All : We are in Your presence; waiting quietly: waiting patiently;**

**waiting to hear yet again that old, familiar story,**

**the one which tells of what You have done for humankind.**

**We quietly wait to hear Your voice and to heed Your Word**

**and to follow in the footprints of others, so long ago.**

*L : Awaken us, this night, like the Shepherds so long ago*

*that we may all – together -- participate again*

*listening and speaking afresh the Beginning of the Good News … …*

**All : “Peace on Earth;**

**and Goodwill to all God’s children**

**as it was; is now, and ever shall be.”.**

*L : Now we join together in words of prayer that our Lord Jesus taught us*

**All : Help us now to honour Your name.**

**Come and set up Your Kingdom.**

**Give us each day, the food we need.**

**Now Forgive us our sins,**

**as we forgive everyone else:**

**all who have done wrong to us.**

**Now keep us from being tempted otherwise. Amen.**

**\*\*\*2-PRAISE : CH4 312; SA5 Away in a Manger, no crib for a bed, ..**

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,**

**the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head**

**the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,**

**the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes**

**but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes,**

**I love you, Lord Jesus, look down from on high,**

**and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay**

**close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.**

**Bless all the dear children in your tender care,**

**and fit us for heaven, to live with you there**

**>>1-READING : Based on the Gospel of Luke, Ch 1: vs. 46ff**

***[ TOGETHER, We read the poetry of the 'Magnificat'.***

***These words to Jesus’s grateful Servant mother, Mary.***

***Let us think of ourselves as Servants of the living God,***

***reflecting upon all His Blessings and goodness***

***towards us as individuals, all of our lives.]***

*L : My soul magnifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,*

**All : for He has no concern for the lowly estate of His servants**.

*L : In the future, all generations will recognise all these Blessings,*

*For He has done great things for us: therefore, His Name is Holy*.

**All : He is merciful to those who respect Him; generations have known this.**

**He showers His blessings on us all in so many different ways;**

**those who are proud, are proud only in their own imaginations:**

**and those who seek raw power, will often be disappointed.**

**Instead He uses us to Bless those who are lonely and needy.**

*L : He will fill those who seek Him with what is good for them;*

**All : Those who have, will be left wanting more, but always seeking.**

*L : He always remembers His promise to look kindly on His people,*

*He has given succour and help to His ‘renewed’ Israel in the past.*

**All : He gave these promises to our own forefathers and ancestors;**

**from Abraham’s people, to Jesus’s followers, forever and ever.**

**All glory be to God that His Word has been forever true; Amen.**

**>>2READING : The PROPHET MICAH : Ch 5 : vs. 2- 5**

*Wait for it … it will happen …*

**>>3-PRAISE : Ch.4 313 SA40 See in yonder manger low …**

**See! in yonder manger low,**

**born for us on earth below,**

**see! the tender Lamb appears**

**promised from eternal years.**

*Refrain*

***Hail, thou ever-blessed morn!***

***Hail, redemption’s happy dawn!***

***Sing through all Jerusalem,***

***‘Christ is born in Bethlehem!’***

**Lo! within a manger lies**

**he who built the starry skies,**

**he who, throned in height sublime,**

**sits amid the cherubim.**

*Refrain*

**Say, ye holy shepherds, say,**

**what your joyful news today;**

**wherefore have ye left your sheep**

**on the lonely mountain steep?**

*Refrain*

**‘As we watched at dead of night,**

**lo! we saw a wondrous light:**

**angels, singing peace on earth,**

**told us of the Saviour’s birth.’**

*Refrain*

**>>3-READING : The Gospel According to LUKE, Ch 2, v. 3ff.**

**Our REFLECTION on the THEME of TODAY’S SCRIPTURE**

**led by Emeritus Minister, Revd Dr Clive Yates**

**TONIGHT’s TOPIC : “GOD ‘BREAKS-IN’ (always ) UNEXPECTEDLY!”**

**\*\*\*4-PRAISE : CH-4 301 SA21 Hark the herald Angels sing**

**Hark the herald angels sing**

**glory to the new-born king**

**peace on earth, and mercy mild,**

**God and sinners reconciled.**

**Joyful, all you nations, rise,**

**join the triumph of the skies;**

**with the angelic host proclaim,**

**'Christ is born in Bethlehem'. *(Refrain...)***

***Hark the herald angels sing***

***glory to the new-born king***

**Christ, by highest heaven adored,**

**Christ, the everlasting Lord,**

**late in time behold him come,**

**offspring of a virgin's womb!**

**Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;**

**hail the incarnate Deity!**

**Pleased as Man with man to dwell,**

**Jesus, our IMMANUEL*. (Refrain...)***

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!**

**Hail the Sun of Righteousness!**

**Light and life to all he brings,**

**risen with healing in his wings**.**Mild he lays his glory by,**

**born that man no more may die,**

**born to raise the sons of earth,**

**born to give them second birth.**

***(Refrain.)***

**\*\*\* OUR PRAYER of SELF- DEDICATION :**

*L :*  ***Tonight, … instead*** *of our usual offertory dedication,*

*we ask You to receive instead,* ***-- our-selves*** *--just as we are.*

*We ask you humbly to look into our hearts this Christmas Eve.*

**All : Try us; search us: re-direct us; guide us:**

**Help us to learn again to speak Your Words and Wisdom**

**to the ears of others who truly search for meaning**

**in the midst of our endless change and confusions.**

**We ask You to receive all our thoughts and devotions**

**in Jesus Name and with Your Blessing upon us: AMEN**

**\*\*\*5-PRAISE : Ch.4 306 SA32 [Adeste Fideles ] O come all ye Faithful …**

**O come, all ye faithful**

**joyful and triumphant.**

**O come ye! O come ye**

**to Beth-lehem.**

**Come and behold Him,**

**born the King of Angels. *O come let us adore Him ( 3x)***

***Christ the Lord*.**

**Sing choirs of Angels,**

**sing in exultation.**

**Sing all ye citizens**

**of heaven above.**

**"Glory to God,**

**Glory in the highest' (Refrain)**

**Yea, Lord we greet Thee,**

**born one happy morning**

**Jesus, to Thee be**

**glo-ry given.**

**Word of the Father**

**now in flesh appearin g. (Refrain)**

**++ A CHARGE to EVERYONE HERE this SPECIAL NIGHT :**

**++ Like the Shepherds went on their way rejoicing,**

**let us go Rejoicing in our hearts and minds**

**carrying the GOOD NEWS with us**

**and**

**GREETING ANYONE AND EVERYON**E **WE MEET BY SAYING,**

**“… A BLESSED and HAPPY Christmas-time to you ! …”**