

## Virtual Carol Service 2020

Welcome and bidding prayer at Wellingore by Rev. Michelle Godbold

Carol – O Holy Night

From Boothby Graffoe

Genesis 3:8-14 read by Ann Avery

Reflection and Prayer by Mike Turner

How many of us can honestly say that we have never told an untruth, a lie? Before you attempt to answer, let me remind you that an untruth can range from the tiniest little so-called white lie (often used not to deceive but to prevent someone being upset) to the real corker where we deny something that we know is true. I'm sure that the answer is none of us are innocent.

That being said, how many of us have, like Adam and Eve in the garden, used a lie to try to excuse us from the guilt of some wrong we have done - even if it really was an accident. 'It wasn't me miss, or sir' might ring a bell.

The trouble is that when we deny doing something we know is wrong, we then have to compound that lie with another and another to retain our air of innocence - and in so doing we become untrustworthy.

Our heavenly Father knows we sometimes, or perhaps often is a better word, do something wrong; and the good news that came with the baby Jesus was that despite our failures he was ready to forgive us if we admitted we had done something amiss.

Perhaps if Adam had simply told the truth, life would have been so much more simple for all of us.

*O God, you desire truth in the inmost heart; forgive us our sins against truth - the untruths within us, the lies, the half-lies, the evasions and the self deceits. Let us stand naked before you, and see ourselves as we really are. Then grant us truth in the inward parts and keep us in truth always.*

Carol– In the bleak mid winter

## From Coleby

### Genesis 22.1-19 – The promise to Abraham – Bentley Nelstrop

#### Reflection and prayer by Rev. Sara Davies

We all know how difficult it is to wait for something that we will really want and our joy when we finally receive it. Abraham and Sarah had waited a very long time for their own child, a son Isaac, and yet in this second reading we hear of Abraham being asked to sacrifice this child who had brought them so much happiness.

Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son, Isaac is a troubling story for many of us, but when read as part of the full story of Abraham, it is seen as an event which reveals the depth of Abraham's trust in God. Trust is one of the qualities God values most in His people. It is not the first time that God has spoken to him or the first time Abraham has been presented with a situation he does not fully understand. God faithfully provided a son to Abraham, even though Abraham could not see how it was possible.

Abraham doesn't hesitate to do what God has asked. Fortunately for him, he again hears the word of God telling him not to kill Isaac and a substitute sacrifice is provided in the form of a ram caught in a thicket right behind Abraham. Because of Abraham's obedience, the Lord promises to bless Abraham, to multiply his offspring exponentially, and to give Abraham's offspring victory over their enemies. The pledge to Abraham comes to fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

This passage also brings our attention to how the world will also go on to wait patiently for another Father to welcome his Son. This child will be the greatest gift mankind will ever receive and yet there will be an instruction for him to ultimately be put to death. However, there will be no substitute sacrifice this time. That child is Jesus, his destiny to be the ultimate sacrifice for evil and sin so that human beings can again be in right relationship with God, each other and all creation. Amen

*Lord, we ask that you remind us of the importance of waiting and grant us patience. We give thanks for Abraham and Sarah who waited a lifetime for the fulfilment of your promise to them. May we take time out in our busy lives to listen for your voice, and remember the real reason that we celebrate Christmas.*

*When we are asked to do something that we really don't want to do, help us to put our trust in you and the plans that you have for each of us, and recognise that obedience doesn't always come naturally or without effort.*

*Thank you Lord for making the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.  
Amen*

**Carol – O Come o come Emmanuel**

## From Harmston

Isaiah 9.2,6,7 – The prophecy of the Messiah's birth – Carol Daman Willems

### Reflection and prayer by Rev. Michelle Godbold

Isaiah, a prophet of the old testament,  
foretells of the birth of a baby  
who is to bring endless peace to the world.  
Isaiah, in making this prophecy,  
was speaking into the situation of the time,  
which saw the King of Judah and his subjects  
facing attack and potentially defeat.

No doubt there was much anxiety  
surrounding their situation  
and what the future may hold for them personally as well as their families and the wider  
community.

We too have faced a year of attack  
of a different sort,  
a year of fear and anxiety  
about the present and about the future  
and indeed these feelings are still there  
lingering in the background today,  
although they may be somewhat  
less than they were due to the hope  
that has been given in  
the finding of vaccines against COVID 19.  
Isaiah in this prophecy that we've just heard  
is advocating continued hope  
in the power of God  
and trust that he will act to save them  
because he is all powerful and faithful.

And God did indeed act,  
fulfilling the prophecy,  
by sending his son, Jesus, into the world., but not just for them but for us too.

When there is instability and uncertainty  
about our future anxiety is normal  
but this Christmas we remember that,  
no matter what, we are never alone,  
that God has acted and will act  
and in the fulness of time

peace will reign  
and it is in this, in his son,  
that we place our hope and put our trust.

*Holy God,*

*We are people who walk in a world of darkness  
but have seen the great light.  
We live in a world of deep darkness  
and yet your light shines upon us.  
We give you thanks for the promise of your son  
of eternal life and peace everlasting  
and we place our hope and trust in you.  
May we never lose sight of the light that you give us and may we be ever ready  
to welcome your light into our lives  
and spread that light to others.*

*Amen.*

**Carol – It came upon a midnight clear**

**From Navenby**

**Micah 5.2-4 – The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem – Sheila Gill**

**Reflection and prayer by Rev. Susan Williams**

The prophet Micah reminds us of God's promise of continued blessing through the descendants of King David, born in the little town of Bethlehem.

David was the youngest of the eight in an unimportant clan. He was absent and overlooked, feeding his flock when the prophet Samuel came to anoint a new king. His life and rule had many ups and downs, but he became a symbol for faithfulness to God, and his country's greatness and God's blessing.

A new saviour – not just for his country, but for the whole world – would be born in Bethlehem, of apparently humble origins, to bring new life and hope to troubled times.

*O God,  
Who astonished the world  
In the two babies born in Bethlehem,  
Be born in our hearts today,  
And build up your rule  
of peace and justice,  
loving kindness and humility,  
through Christ the Prince of Peace.  
Amen.*

Carol - O little town of Bethlehem

### From Temple Bruer

Luke 1.26-38 – The Annunciation to Mary – Glo Reed

Reflection and prayer by Rev. Sara Davies

The angel Gabriel appeared not only to Zechariah and to Mary but also to the prophet Daniel more than 500 years earlier. Each time he appeared he brought important messages from God.

Mary was very young and poor, not the sort of person that you would have expected God to choose for an important task. But God still chose Mary to undertake one of the greatest tasks of obedience ever asked. Life for a pregnant, unmarried girl would have been very difficult, she faced disownment by her family and could have been forced into begging or worse to support herself. Her reputation would have been in ruins, how do you think that you would have responded? Would you have worried about people supporting you?

Amazingly, Mary appeared more perturbed when she first meets Gabriel than when she has learned the content of the message. Perhaps Mary was aware that the presence of an angel meant that she was about to face an overwhelming challenge. She quickly went from bewilderment to acceptance. Whilst she may not have fully understood the life-changing significance of her calling, she certainly would have understood the potential exclusion from her community, but still, she said "Here I am".

Mary knew that God was asking her to serve Him and she willingly obeyed. Worry or anxiety may affect our own, individual choice to serve God, perhaps we feel that our experience, ability or education will make us an unlikely candidate. May we take strength from the faith shown by Mary and her example of true discipleship, in submission to God's word and promise.

*Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the granting of your grace to the Virgin Mary, to bring our Saviour in to the world in human form. Though she herself would ultimately experience great pain, her selfless act brought your Son into the world, the promised successor to the throne of David.*

*May we too have the confidence to accept our calling, for you to use us and our gifts in whatever way that you see fit, for the benefit of others. May we offer ourselves willingly, having faith in your ability for us to do what may initially seem impossible. Amen*

Carol – Away in a Manger

## From Wellingore

### Luke 2.1-7 – The birth of Jesus – Toni Butroid

#### Reflection and prayer by Rev. Michelle Godbold

The birth of a baby is usually  
a special and joyous occasion,  
although there isn't anything particularly unique about a baby being born.

UNICEF presently estimates that there are  
about 4.3 births every second worldwide.  
The joy of birth comes at  
the miracle of life that is revealed by birth  
and so it is no surprise that it is celebrated.

And this is what we celebrate at this time of year,  
the birth of a baby.  
However of course  
this birth was extra special because  
it was and is unique,  
not because it occurred in place  
where animals were kept,  
indeed I expect there have been other births like this  
and there are certainly more unusual places  
where babies have been born,  
but it was unique because  
this was the birth of God,  
God choosing to be born as one of us,  
a tiny human child,  
fully human and yet fully divine.  
To think about the significance  
of this single fact blows your mind.  
God becoming a tiny helpless baby.  
Laying aside his power to be one of us,  
one with us, Emmanuel.

Amongst the lights and the tinsel,  
the festive cheer and wrapping paper  
we can all too easily lose sight  
of the meaning of our celebrations.

The simple fact that God loved us so much  
he came into the world in the same way we all do.  
He was born to save us from ourselves.

As we look upon the Christ child in our minds eye,  
we are humbled that he chose to do this for us.

*Holy God,  
We thank you for the gift of your son Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem.*

*We thank you for  
the unsurpassable love you have for us,  
displayed as you entered our world  
as a tiny human baby.*

*Give us eyes this Christmas, and always,  
to see the love that emanates  
from the Christ child laid in the manger.*

*May we know that  
each one is of utmost worth to you  
and that you have demonstrated  
that you choose to be with us  
in the darkness of this world,  
by coming into this world as one of us.  
Shining a light, giving us hope and loving us infinitely.*

*Amen.*

**Carol – Hark the herald**

**From Boothby Graffoe**

**Luke 2.8-16 – The shepherds go to the manger – Mark Sims**

**Reflection and prayer by Mike Turner (Reader)**

I wonder what the angel in this story looked like?

Not, I think, like the little sweet innocent figure that we often see depicted in children's books. Would those cherubic angels have scared a bunch of hardened, weather beaten shepherds - regarded by many as social outcasts - out in the hill fields guarding their flocks of sheep against all manner of human and animal predators? I don't think so!

But the angel did more than scare them - it terrified them. Yet soon after hearing this frightening message came the sounds of hundreds more heavenly beings singing God's praises - their fears evaporated and were replaced by an irresistible urge to go and find the baby they had been told about. Armed with one clue, that they would find him in a feeding trough, in a manger, they began their quest without delay.

When their searching was rewarded by the discovery of this special child, the joy they experienced was beyond anything they had ever known, so much so that they told the story to anyone and everyone they met.

Do we who have also found him do the same?

*Father God, send your angel to shock us out of our complacency; lift our spirits and fill our hearts with the longing to search for that special child - and having found him give us the joy and zeal to tell everyone we meet where he may be found. Amen*

**Carol - We three kings**

From Coleby

**Matthew 2.1-11 – The magi are led by the star to Jesus – Hazel Curtis**

**Reflection and Prayer by Rev. Sara Davies**

The story of the wise men is an important part of the nativity, especially in primary school productions, however St Matthew's Gospel does not describe the story as many understand it. We are not told how many wise men there were, where they came from and what exactly their role was. How did they know that the star would lead them to the Messiah? Perhaps they had received a special message from God directing them?

It's strange isn't it that these people from some far away land, perhaps it was Persia, recognised Jesus as the Messiah when most of God's chosen people in Israel did not. The wise men travelled to see Jesus, bearing gifts, eventually finding him living in a house, no sign anymore of a stable. A considerable amount of time had passed, they had undertaken a lengthy journey. Nowadays people tend to expect Jesus to come to look for them, to explain precisely who he is and what he has to offer. Life's all about choice isn't it? Who can give us the best deal? We don't even have to travel these days, we can run our lives from our computers if we have them or even our phones.

Herod recognised Jesus as someone of importance, someone to challenge his position of King of the Jews, appointed under the authority of Rome. He knew that the Jewish people expected the Messiah to come soon; he went out of his way to try and find Jesus, even if it was to get rid of this baby he understood as a threat.

The gifts that the wise men brought, Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, were expensive gifts, worthy of Jesus' s status. Maybe Joseph and Mary had to sell them to fund their escape to Egypt, they needed to be practical. Whatever the reality, the wise men brought gifts and worshipped Jesus for who he was. We still can learn from them, honouring Christ for who he is and being willing to give him what is valuable to us. Amen



*Heavenly Father, help us to selflessly give you our worship and praise, and witness to others that they might come to know you as their Saviour. May we never stop searching for all the signs that you give us of your presence amongst us, and not become complacent in our faith.*

*We ask that you help us to become the people that you meant us to be, recognising your perfection and the need for us to be the best people that we can possibly be.*

*Amen*

## **Carol - Joy to the world**

### **From Harmston**

#### **John 1.1-14 – The Incarnation of the Word of God - Rob wheeler**

#### **From Navenby**

This baby, Jesus,  
who we celebrate being born at Christmas,  
is older than time itself,  
he was in the beginning,  
Before time itself he was there  
he came into this world,  
becoming human, to save us,  
but he was rejected by the world,  
and gave his life so that we might live.

This baby was the light coming into  
this world of darkness  
and whilst the world still seems  
to be a very dark place  
that light still shines,  
With this light there is no darkness  
the darkness of this world will never rule  
because Jesus our King and saviour  
was born, lived, died and rose again for us.  
'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out.'  
And so we rejoice that  
by his coming into our world as a tiny baby  
we have come to know God and his love for us,  
we rejoice that he is with us today  
lighting our paths, protecting and guiding us

and we rejoice that he calls us his children  
And waits to welcome us home.

*Holy God,  
We give you thanks for your light in this world.  
We thank you for coming to be with us.  
Help us all to be beacons of your light to those who we meet.  
Giving us the courage to step out in faith and spread the good news.  
Giving us the strength and the resources to those who still dwell in darkness.  
Guide us to walk in ways all the days of our lives.  
This we ask in Jesus name, Emmanuel, light of the world.  
Amen.*

**Affirmation of faith and Closing Prayers by Reverend Susan Williams**

**Carol -O come all ye faithful**

**Blessing and dismissal at Wellingore by Rev. Michelle Godbold**