

Hearsall at Home

13th December 2020: Third Sunday of Advent

## ***Hearsall at Home***

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home.  
As this is the third Sunday of Advent, you might like to have a couple of candles ready to light with me at the start of our service today.

Our time of fellowship this Sunday is on Zoom from 11:30am.

Please go to:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85454368639>

Meeting ID: 851 6681 8535

No password is required for this session.

It's our Nativity Service, so we gather with much joy as we anticipate seeing our children remind us of Jesus' story.

Order of Service 13<sup>th</sup> December 2020

***Nativity***

Lighting of Advent Candles (Anne Thompson)

We light this candle to remind us of John the Baptist and of all God's messengers who prepare the way of the Saviour's coming.

**The Apostle John writes, God sent his messenger, a man named John, who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear his message and believe.**

Welcome

Hello everybody and welcome to our Nativity Service for 2020. Obviously, we've not been able to get the children together again this year, so what we're doing is we're having the wonderful service they did last year, at the heart of our service today. We've got some prayers and some thoughts before then, and a carol and a song, which we hope you'll enjoy, and then we come to that wonderful moment when we're going to watch that lovely nativity video all together again. So, welcome to our 2020's Nativity Service and let's enjoy our time of worshipping together. And let's begin with singing that great hymn *Look to the skies: there's a celebration*.

Song Look to the Skies

Verse 1

Look to the skies, there's a celebration!  
Lift up your heads, join the angel song,  
For our Creator becomes our Saviour  
As a baby born.  
Angels amazed, bow in adoration;  
Glory to God in the highest heaven.  
Send the good news out to every nation,  
For our hope has come.

*Chorus*

*Worship the King, come see His brightness,  
Worship the King, His wonders tell,  
Jesus our King is born today,  
We welcome You, Emmanuel.*

Verse 2

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Father forever, the Prince of Peace,  
There'll be no end to Your rule of justice,  
For it shall increase.  
Light of Your face  
Come to pierce our darkness,  
Joy of Your heart come to chase our gloom,  
Star of the morning, a new day dawning,  
Make our hearts Your home.

*Chorus*

Verse 3

Quietly He came as a helpless baby,  
One day in power He will come again.  
Swift through the skies, He will burst with splendour  
On the earth to reign.  
Jesus, I bow at Your manger lowly,  
Now in my life let Your will be done.  
Live in my flesh by Your Spirit Holy  
Till Your kingdom comes.

*Chorus*

*The first Christmas star that led the way  
Still guides us to God's love today.*

Prayers of adoration and confession

Father, we thank you that, though Jesus your Son is brighter than the brightest star, though he is older than the universe itself, yet he loves us still just as we are, with the love of the dearest of friends. Thank you that he came as a baby at Christmas time, a light to shine light into the world. Thank you that he came to show us how to live our lives full of love and truth and grace, and thank you that he came to rescue us from all that is bad. We praise his name today. And Lord, as we pray we realise that we are far from perfect. We say the wrong thing. We think unworthy thoughts. We do the wrong thing. So Lord, please forgive us when we get it wrong, for the sake of Jesus, our Saviour and Lord, and renew us again on the pathway of life. Amen.

Offering

Well, it's time to think about our offering and I just want to thank everybody who's managed to carry on supporting the life of the church financially throughout this difficult year. Some of you have been giving online through your cards and your bank accounts; some have been getting the cash to those people who can process that for you. Some of us have been increasing our giving and that's really appreciated; some of us might have been able to give a little less because times are hard; it's been a difficult year, and of course we understand that. But, through all of our different ways of being generous, God provides for us all and we are thankful. Let's pray. Heavenly Father we thank you for the gift of Jesus; a gift of indescribable value. And in our own humble way, we delight to give back to him and to others in our gifts to church and to charities; gifts of time, money and presents. Lord, take all of our gifts and let your Christmas light shine through every one for Jesus' sake Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

And now I'm delighted to say that our intercessions today have been written by our dear brother, Derek Noel, and I think Andy, another dear brother, Andy Thompson, is going to read them for us.

Lord, with our hearts and minds filled with the wonder of Christmas, we remember

## Hearsall at Home

those for whom this time will be far from happy. We bring to you, Lord, all who are sad; those who have lost someone they loved and those who are concerned about relatives and friends.

We bring to you, Lord, those who in time of feasting will be hungry, and we ask You to bless all who work and give time and money to many in need.

Father, when we think of your great gift of Jesus, we pray for all who have given their lives by making that love known to others. Especially we pray for Lee and Sarah and the family and the work they have done in Benin. We pray that their Christmas time this year, spent with Sarah's family in Germany will be a blessing to them all.

We pray for those without a home, for refugees and those seeking a place of safety. We pray for peace –for Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Uzbekistan and so many places where there is hatred and despair.

We pray for health and healing. May the vaccination programme, beginning in Coventry, bring hope and healing where it is most needed.

And Lord we pray for children near and far. May they know and receive the love and care they need to grow into the people You want them to be, and in turn learn to love and care for others.

And now we will have a time of quiet as we bring to you those on our hearts who need our special prayers at this time.

Lord, hear our prayers for we ask them in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

AMEN

### **Doors Ajar**

Well, now we come to our Doors Ajar feature and we've got something a little bit different today. Our dear sister, Sarah Lewis, is going to invite us on a journey as she unfolds the idea of the Coventry Nativity Trail around the churches of our city.

## Hearsall at Home

Big thanks to David for allowing me a third Doors Ajar slot – perhaps he thinks with practice I'll improve! Now this one is a bit different to most Doors Ajar because I'm not just looking back at what I've done but also what I'm going to do over the Christmas period to make sure I keep my door ajar! I am going to follow the Nativity Trail – the what? I hear you cry; listen on and you'll learn!

The Nativity Trail involves 17 Coventry churches, most within easy walking distance of the city centre. All of the churches will have a poster displayed, each with a character from the nativity story. The personal challenge is to build up a list of all of the characters pictured. The design of the posters is aimed at all ages, and none is inside a building, so the trail can be undertaken in a Covid safe way. Posters will be displayed from Saturday 12th December until Sunday 3rd January. The Nativity Trail is really a bit of fun but a great way of learning more about the Christmas story with songs, readings and poems, available via a QR code on all of the posters. However, if you have succeeded in finding five of the characters, you can collect a goodie bag from the Queens Road church car park on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

Both the Light Trail (which was an alternative to Hallowe'en) and the Nativity Trail were the idea and creation of Sarah White, a member at Queens Road church and further details can be found on the Queens Road website. I will also be updating on the Hearsall Facebook page.

For me, the Light Trail was a game changer. Not only did it introduce me to passages from the Bible I was not familiar with and venues I had heard of but never seen, but it gave me a purpose to my daily walks; a reason to look forward to going out, rather than searching for reasons not to. Why else would I have given up my extra hour in bed when the clocks went back, to walk around the city centre and visit, well look at, the Cathedral, the Prayer House and other city centre places of worship? It was 8:30 and the sun was shining, birds were singing and bells were ringing. #PandemicForgotten for a while!

So what will I be doing over Christmas? - I will be following the Nativity Trail with the aim of reaching over 17 (I only found 11 last time) and hopefully there won't be a white Christmas to stop me!

Thanks Sarah...

Brief Reflection

*The weight of a snowflake...*

*So, the first Christmas star that led the way*

*Still guides us to God's love today.*

How much does a snowflake weigh, do you think? There was once a little girl and she was called Evarista. And Evarista lived with her very large family... her sisters and her brothers and her mum and her dad, out in the forest. It was quite a lonely place, and to be honest, sometimes, although she was in a big family, Evarista felt like quite a lonely little girl. She was the youngest child in the family and she didn't always feel very much use; she thought people could get on quite well without her and everyone seemed to be too busy in the run up to Christmas to take much notice of her.

Well, on Christmas Eve she stepped out of the house for a little while; it was safe enough; she wasn't far from the house and she sat on a log underneath a tree, and sure enough the snow started to fall and Evarista sat watching things turn magically white as the minutes went by. But then she was very pleased because a very good friend of hers stopped by. Walking through the woods, came her dear friend Bear, and Bear sat on the log with Evarista and the two friends enjoyed watching the snow falling and they really liked to think how lovely the forest was looking. But Evarista was still feeling a little bit sorry for herself, thinking nobody really needed her in her family or in this world; what could little Evarista do? Well, the snow got a little bit thicker. It fell down from the sky and one particular snowflake fell right on Evarista's nose. And as it fell there she just thought it weighed absolutely nothing and when it fell there she said, "Bear, so you know, what I think, a snowflake doesn't weigh anything at all." And little Bear said, "I don't agree with you there Evarista. Do you know what? Last year I was sitting under this tree looking at this branch which is just above our heads, and, over an hour or two it got snowier and snowier and whiter and whiter and the branch began to bend down until it was almost touching the ground. And then, one tiny little snowflake came drifting down. It wasn't very big and this little snowflake landed on the branch and do you know what Evarista? It was big enough to cause the branch to finally go right down to the ground... All of the snow dropped off, and then up flipped the branch in a very dramatic way."

Well Evarista looked up at the branch now and it was getting heavier and coming lower and lower down. And she thought about what Bear had said.

And Bear said, "Oh, Snowflakes might be very, very small but every little snowflake can make a difference in this world, and every snowflake can be special. And the two friends sat under the branch and the branch got lower and lower until Evarista saw one silvery, beautiful snowflake drop down to the branch and it was enough to weigh the branch down and then up went the branch and the snow all fell off, and the snow came dropping down on top of Evarista and on top of Bear, and Bear said, "Merry Christmas Evarista, I'm going home!"

Evarista ran into the house and she gave a big warm smile to all of her sisters and brothers, and to her dad, and to her mum, and then she saw that mum was very, very busy and she wanted the table clearing ready to set it for Christmas breakfast. So...

Evarista set the table really beautifully, and nicely and made it just perfect the way that mummy liked.

And her mum said, "Evarista, you've made a difference for me this afternoon. It's partly all the lovely helping you've done setting the table, but it's partly that lovely smile you brought into my day. So thank you."

And Evarista thought, well, perhaps it's true. Just like every little snowflake, well, every little person can make a difference too.

Well of course, we are remembering the gift of Jesus into our world. He was just a tiny baby lying in a crib... But tiny as he was, he made a huge difference to the life of our world. Let's sing of that little baby Jesus, lying *Away in a Manger*...

### Carol **Away in a Manger**

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 Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,  
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there.

Hi everybody, it's the moment we have been waiting for now. Yes, we are about to watch the Christmas nativity. It was the 2019 version, but it's also the 2020 version. So, kids, I hope many of you are watching it, eager to see yourselves again in the show, to see how brilliantly you did; and all of us, let's enjoy the drama that's presented to us, but let's also be open in our hearts to a message of love and hope this Christmas time. Our nativity...

***The Nativity – Also available on DVD***

So... the Christmas star that led the way  
Still shows us to God's love today.

Did I get that right I'm not sure. But anyways, what a brilliant show, but before we say thank you to everybody it's worth noting that the little children who performed in that Nativity aren't as little now as they were when they recorded a year ago. To show you that, we asked the children, many of them, to give a greeting this Christmas time. And they've recorded this greeting just in the last week or two, so you can see how they've grown... And what they look like now.

**Christmas Greetings from our children:**

Thanks

Well, a huge thank you first of all to the children of the church for the work they did last year and for the recording of the video. Thanks too to their parents and others

## Hearsall at Home

who may have supported them in getting these videos to us. It's so lovely to see them and to receive their greetings. Thank you to everybody who helped record the original video, especially to Jackie and Fran and all their team of helpers. Thanks to everyone who took part, whether you are a child or an adult. And thanks, too, to those who've done extra work to bring it to us again this year. And may you have a super Christmas time. Hopefully, I'll be seeing you all before the big day in one shape or form, but God bless you as we continue to celebrate and anticipate the gift of Jesus Christ to our world.

Well let's share, shall we, in the words of the grace.

### The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;

And the love of God;

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Be with us all, evermore.

Amen

And let's sing our regular blessing for one another... *May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you wherever he may send you.*

### Sung Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you

Wherever he may send you;

May he guide you through the wilderness;

Protect you through the storm;

May he bring you home rejoicing

At the wonders he has shown you;

May he bring you home rejoicing

Once again into our doors.