

ORPHIR and STENNESS CHURCH
Watchnight Service 24th. Dec., 2022
Transcript

Ed. 26.12.22

1130: WELCOME

Good evening. Welcome to our Watchnight Service.

Wherever you have come from tonight,
whether you come here regularly, or occasionally,
perhaps even for the first time, you are welcome to our worship.
A special time, a sentimental time; a reflective time; above all a happy time.
'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined'. (*Isaiah 9:2*)

We light 4 Advent Candles:

Jesus said, *'I am the light of the world'. The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has never put it out.*

Call to worship

*Though darkness covers the earth and dark night the nations,
the Lord shall shine upon you, and over you shall his glory appear. ...
The Lord shall be your everlasting light, your God shall be your glory. (From Isaiah 60)*

Let us Worship God:

1st. Hymn: 296 While Humble Shepherds

Setting the scene

On a night like this in an ordinary little town, in a land under occupation, as indeed it is today,
among ordinary folk, living under violence and threat of violence
God touched the earth – as so often he had done in the past,
in blessing or in warning – but this time God stayed,
seeking among humankind those who would grow with and through this beloved child,
to become partners with God in establishing the Kingdom that is to come.
Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to all God's people.

Let us pray:

As we gather this night, may there be excitement in the air, a song on our lips and joy in our hearts. May God help us to remember why we celebrate Christmas. May the Word which was made flesh be heard in our worship.

May Christ be born again in this congregation, and in the life of each person here.

May the love of Christmas fill the church, and the peace of Christmas fill our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Choir 1: What child is this?

Reading: Isaiah 9: 2 and 6 – 7 Peter will read for us:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Prayer: Let us Pray:

On this holy night, may God enfold us in the warm mystery of his love,
as we join our voices with the heavenly host, that we may sing to his glory on high.
Like the shepherds, may we find, or find anew, the one for whom we have waited, Jesus Christ,
the Word made flesh. Amen.

Reading Luke 2: 1-20: (New Century Version): ***The Birth of Jesus***

At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order that all people in the countries under Roman rule must list their names in a register. This was the first registration; it was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to their own towns to be registered.
So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee, and went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. Joseph registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was now pregnant. While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby, and she gave birth to her first son. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the baby with pieces of cloth and laid him in a feeding trough.

Shepherds Hear About Jesus:

That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and they became very frightened. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people. Today your Saviour was born in the town of David. He is Christ, the Lord. This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a feeding box."

Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel, praising God and saying:
"Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth let there be peace among the people who please God."

When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other,
"Let's go to Bethlehem. Let's see this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about."
So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in a feeding trough. When they had seen him, they told what the angels had said about this child. Everyone was amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured these things and continued to think about them. Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything they had seen and heard. It had been just as the angel had told them.

Hymn 301: Hark the Herald Angels sing

Choir 2: O Holy Night

Reading: John 1:1-14; (CEV); ***The Word of Life***

In the beginning was the one who is called the Word.
The Word was with God, and was truly God.
From the very beginning, the Word was with God.
And with this Word, God created all things.
Nothing was made without the Word.
Everything that was created received its life from him,
and his life gave light to everyone.
The light keeps shining in the dark,
and darkness has never put it out.
God sent a man named John, who came to tell about the light,

and to lead all people to have faith.
John wasn't this light.
He came only to tell about the light.

The true light that shines on everyone was coming into the world.
The Word was in the world, but no one knew him,
though God had made the world with his Word.
He came into his own world, but his own nation did not welcome him.
Yet some people accepted him and put their faith in him.
So he gave them the right to be the children of God.
They were not God's children by nature, or because of any human desires.
God himself was the one who made them his children.

The Word became a human being and lived here with us.
We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.
From him the complete gifts of undeserved grace and truth have come down to us. Amen.

Meditation: Reminders

I remember the story I heard long ago
In innocent childhood, believing it; so
Amazingly different; as clear as a bell –
O yes, I remember it well.

I remember the story shared often since then,
Through frequent reminders, again and again;
Those great Bible stories; their meaning so clear –
O yes, I remember each year.

I remember the story - traditional words;
Familiar old carols; I never was bored
With shepherds, and angels who came from above –
O yes, I remember with love.

I remember the story – the manger; the babe;
Three wise-men who travelled; the gifts that they gave;
The wonder enshrined in the Bethlehem boy –
O yes, I remember with joy.

I remember the story – but what does it mean
To me now I'm hearing it over again?
Will it have an impact; a message, or not?
O yes, I remember – so what?

I remember the story – so now I must search
To know it's as fresh as I found it at first;
To feel the excitement, the mystery too.
O yes, I remember – it's new!

I remember the story ... So this is the deal –
Engage with its newness, and know that it's real;
Be changed by the wonder; be moved in the 'now'.
O yes, I remember – and how!

I remember the story – but not from the past;
It's modern; still topical; with us to last.

So come now – discover a meaning that's new.

O yes, I remember... Will you? 2:00

From "With an open eye" by Tom Gordon, Wild Goose Publications, 2011 ©Tom Gordon

Prayer:

Most loving God, whose gracious gift was given
To lowly folk on Bethlehem's hills that night,
Grant to us, like them, to see the dark clouds riven,
And earth resplendent with a heavenly light –
To know the wonder of that Holy Birth,
The coming of the love of God to earth.

11.55: CHOIR: Hy. 309 Still the night

SILENCE

1200: CHRIST IS BORN!: Lighting of the Christ Candle

May we who have knelt at the manger
always have room to hold within ourselves the Christmas Child.
May we who have gazed on the face of God learn to live fully,
and to share freely, all that we have and are.
So may Emmanuel - God with us and for us – be once again incarnated in the world.
- Pat Bennett

Christmas Greetings and Sharing the Peace

I invite you to share the peace of God and wish one another a Happy Christmas.

Let us Pray:

Lord, we pray for each person here, and for each family represented tonight.
We give thanks that you hold every single one of us in your hand.
Fill us anew with the wonder of your presence;
may we take the blessing we receive out into the cold night air,
then back into the warmth of our families,
so that our Christmas will be truly filled with your Spirit.
Lord, as we share in the festivities of Christmas
with families round the tree and the table,
help us to remember families who see each other only at Christmas;
tables with empty places where loved ones used to sit.
We pray for all who have to be at work, or away from home,
and for all those who are in need that we may rejoice
in the true meaning of the Christmas season. Amen.

Hymn 306 O come, all ye faithful (**v.1-3**)

SENDING OUT and BENEDICTION

May the Lord who lifts the lowly from the dust fill you with wonder this night.
May you return to your homes glorifying God and praising him.
May all who meet you this Christmas Day
be amazed at what Christ has done in you, and through you.
And the blessing of God – Creator, Son and Spirit –
go with you, and stay with you now and always. Amen.

Hymn 306: O come, all ye faithful (last verse)