




Sunday 20th and 26th December 2020

Sunday worship on is on  YouTube

The easiest way to find the link to the YouTube meeting each Sunday is to find the link on the Corps web page. Type

www.salvationarmy.org.uk/ramsgate and select **Church on YouTube**

You can also find us by searching on YouTube and on the Ramsgate Facebook page.

But we want to still “meet together” and share our thoughts and prayers and testimonies. It will give a chance to share how God has spoken to us during the meeting – and allow us to encourage each other.

Sunday 20 th 10 am	Ramsgate Church at Home (YouTube)
Sunday 20 th 11.15 am	ZOOM fellowship
Sunday 20 th 12 noon	ZOOM Youth Group
Tuesday 22 nd 7pm	ZOOM Advent Bible Study
Christmas Day 9am	Ramsgate Church at Home (YouTube)
Christmas Day 10 am	ZOOM fellowship
Sunday 27 th 10am	Ramsgate Church at Home (YouTube)
Thursday 31 st	Watch night service from 11pm

Ramsgate ZOOM 8651865167

If you have no internet that we are providing each week's service on a DVD which we will deliver to you.



Please let us know if you **do not want** a DVD each week. Also tell us if you **need help** watching the DVDs we are sending.

Message from our Territorial Commanders.

You can find this on the Salvation Army YouTube channel

https://youtu.be/OXA_yA-QAfM

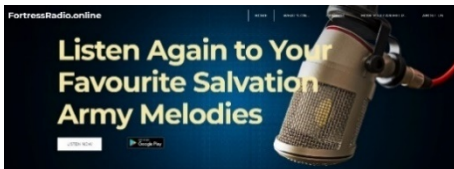


Commissioner Jill
Speaks about peace and her
Christmas gift to us is that we might
receive God's peace this Christmas

Songs of Praise Sunday 20th 1.15pm

The UK's Favourite Carol

From the glorious surroundings of St Paul's Cathedral in London, Aled Jones counts down the top ten carols, as voted for by viewers in a UK-wide online poll. With an array of star guests.



There is a full day of activities on
Fortress Radio.

<https://www.fortressradio.online/listen-now.html>

Maggie is available with the constant prayer line where you can call or text for prayer. You can contact her on 07840 753 603

Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.



Birthdays

Jo Harrington	23-Dec
Angela Miller	28-Dec
Paul Letts	29-Dec

Prayers please for

For Inga following the tragic death of her grandson Michael aged 35 years. For Grant who will need further treatment at Kings Hospital in London. For Al, and David also awaiting surgery. Pray this will come soon. Kate recovering at home from Covid. Pray for a FULL AND SWIFT RECOVERY. Paul, son of Hazel who continues his chemotherapy; Brenda Austin and Liz Harden. Please continue to pray especially for Archie – and Lisa and Scott.

A prayer (From the Iona Community)

When the world was dark
and the city was quiet, you came.

You crept in beside us.
And no one knew. Only the few
who dared to believe
that God might do something different.



Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of tonight/today's world;
not the friendly darkness
as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,
but the fearful darkness,
in which people have stopped believing
that war will end
or that food will come
or that a government will change
or that the Church cares?

Will you come into that darkness
and do something different
to save your people from death and despair?

Will you come into the quietness of this city/town,
not the friendly quietness
as when lovers hold hands,
but the fearful silence when
the phone has not rung,
the letter has not come,
the friendly voice no longer speaks,
the doctor's face says it all?

Will you come into that darkness,
and do something different,
not to distract, but to embrace your people?

And will you come into the dark corners
and the quiet places of our lives?

We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden, or want to be,
but because the fullness of our lives long for
depends on us being as open and vulnerable to you
as you were to us
when you came,
wearing no more than nappies,
and trusting human hands
to hold their maker.

Will you come into our lives,
if we open them to you
and do something different?

When the world was dark
and the city was quiet
you came.

You crept in beside us.

Do the same this Christmas, Lord.

Do the same this Christmas.

Amen.

(Iona Community)

What are your prayers, hopes, and dreams this Christmas? In what way
might Christ creep in beside you? However that may be, whatever your
pain, sorrow, or joys this day, may the light of Christ warm your heart.

Thoughts from Major John

No Room.

Watching a service on YouTube this week from Kettering, the leader directed us to just a few words in Luke 2 verse 7. 'She (Mary) wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.' My mind almost immediately went to a song in our song book (420) which we do not sing so much these days, but asks the question, Have you any room for Jesus?

Have you any room for Jesus,
He who bore your load of sin?
As he knocks and asks admission,
Sinner, will you let him in?
Perhaps we don't like being referred too as sinners and consider it old fashioned, but never the less the second verse carries on to challenge us....
Room for pleasure, room for business,
But for Christ the crucified,
Not a place that he can enter
In the heart for which he died.

No room!

Verse three reminds us there is an opportune moment when we need to act...
Have you any time for Jesus,
As in grace he calls again?
O today is time accepted,
Tomorrow you may call in vain.

In 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 6 verses 1 and 2, Paul urges his readers not to receive God's grace in vain.

'I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation.'

The chorus of the song reads...

Room for Jesus, King of Glory!

Hasten now, his word obey!

Swing you hearts door widely open,

Bid him enter while you may.

This Christmas if you haven't done before, will you make room for Jesus, King of Glory, and bid him enter while you may?

Time to Smile

Woman at the Returns Counter.

My husband bought me this sweater for Christmas. Since then, I've been giving everyone I touch shocks from the static electricity it picks up. I'd like a replacement please – and I'd like it free of charge!

1st Man – I got my wife a fridge for Christmas!

2nd Man – That's not very romantic, is it?

1st Man – You wait. I'm betting her face will light up when she opens it!

Scrooge was enjoying a festive game of football with the Charles Dickens team. The game was almost over and he was disappointed he hadn't scored a goal. But, then thankfully, the Ghost of Christmas passed.

A shopper was looking for an Advent calendar. The shopkeeper said, 'We don't get so many in these days. I'd say their days are numbered!'

A man appeared in court and the judge asked what the charge was. His lawyer replied that he had done his Christmas shopping too early. The judge replied, 'Well that sort of thing might be annoying, but it hardly seems like a crime!'

The man replied, 'Exactly, your honour! But perhaps I should have waited for the shop to open first.'

Quiz

1. Who were the Tamworth two?
2. In which State did Martin Luther King lead the bus boycott?
3. Who vanished off the yacht Lady Ghislane?
4. Which saint is on the Pope's signet ring?
5. Which country had a President with a spouse named Ladybird?

Christmas

1. Who introduced Christmas carols to formal church services?
2. Which foreign city gives the city of Westminster a Christmas tree every year to adorn Trafalgar Square?
3. Why was Christmas Day particularly special to Princess Alexandra, W.C. Field, and Charlie Chaplin?
4. Which monarch changed the customary Christmas fare from goose to turkey?
5. At what time on British television on Christmas Day is the Queen's Speech traditionally first broadcast?

Anagrams Strictly Come Dancing personalities.

WICKED ALUMNI ALAN

I RUB LOTION ON

ON TUNE BAKED

Christmas cards supplied by David Richards dating back to 1914-1918 war



Worship at home over Christmas

This week we continue our theme and look at welcome.

Christmas Day 25th December – our Christmas day service

We will have a YouTube service to share from 9.00 am and then we will ZOOM at the earlier time of 10.00am (for those awake!)

Sunday 27th December – a shared YouTube service from DHQ

We will ZOOM at the normal time of 11.15am

Thursday 31st December – Please let Carl know if you would like to share some of New Year's eve together by ZOOM – a quiz – a look back – and a time of prayer and dedication as we look forward. If there is enough interest we will arrange this time together.

Guess Where?

Thanks to
WW Martin
for a wonderful
restoration of
our fire
damaged
entrance door



Worship at home 20th December 2020 – Welcome.

Father in heaven,
our hearts desire the warmth of your love
and our minds are searching for the light of your Word.
Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour
and give us the strength to grow in love,
that the dawn of his coming
may find us rejoicing in his presence
and welcoming the light of his truth.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

AMEN

It was on a starry night **Introduced by Sheila and Meg**

It was on a starry night when the hills were bright,
earth lay sleeping, sleeping calm and still;
then in a cattle shed, in a manger bed,
a boy was born, King of all the world.
And all the angels sang for him,
the bells of heaven rang for him;
for a boy was born, King of all the world.
And all the angels sang for him,
the bells of heaven rang for him;
for a boy was born, King of all the world

Soon the shepherds came that way, where the baby lay,
and were kneeling, kneeling by his side,
And their hearts believed again, For the peace of men;
For a boy was born, King of all the world.

Joy Webb

Isaiah 9:2-7. Read by Maggie

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Carol of The Bells performed by Cimorelli. **Introduced by Jacqueline and Ellie**

Hark! How the bells
Sweet silver bells
All seem to say,
"Throw cares away"
Christmas is here
Bringing good cheer
To young and old
Meek and the bold

Ding, dong, ding, dong
That is their song
With joyful ring
All carolling
One seems to hear
Words of good cheer

From everywhere
Filling the air

Isaiah 11:1-9 Read by Ellie

1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—
3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
5 Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
6 The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
7 The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
8 The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
9 They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

The Star Carol (John Rutter) Ruthie introduces this carol.

Ruthie is singing as part of the Stay at Home Choir which premiered this carol on Friday believing it is the World's Biggest Ever Christmas Carol. Ruthie is joined by 1000s of other singers and The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

(We didn't mention this in the interview, but Ruthie has been in seven (now 6) choirs and has performed over 72 songs during lock down.)

Sing this night, for a boy is born in Bethlehem,
Christ our Lord in a lowly manger lies;
Bring your gifts, come and worship at his cradle,
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

See his star shining bright
In the sky this Christmas night!
Follow me joyfully;
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

Angels bright, come from heaven's highest glory,
Bear the news with its message of good cheer:
"Sing, rejoice, for a King is come to save us,
Hurry to Bethlehem to see the son of Mary!"

See, he lies in his mother's tender keeping;
Jesus Christ in her loving arms asleep.
Shepherds poor, come to worship and adore him,
Offer their humble gifts before the son of Mary.

Let us all pay our homage at the manger,
Sing his praise on this joyful Christmas Night;
Christ is come, bringing promise of salvation;
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

Mavis shares a favourite poem

Luke 1:26-38 Read by Sam

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Silent Night

Chosen by Sandra and David and played by David.

Sandra writes, David and I both share Silent night, Holy Night, as our favourite Christmas Carol.

The words tell us of the nativity story, the events that happened on that night, and then verses 2 and 3 finish with the words "Jesus Christ is here" Amen - Jesus Christ is here in this world today. Being a musician David remarks on the harmony of this beautiful tune, which can be changed in every verse whilst the melody stays the same. This together reminds both of us that whatever changes and differences in life Jesus stays the same Our Friend and Saviour.

Lighting of the 4th Advent Candle

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round the virgin mother and child;
Holy infant, tender and mild,
Rests in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night!
Guiding star, lend thy light.
See, the eastern wise men bring
gifts and homage to our King,
Jesus Christ is here.

Silent night! Holy night!
Wondrous star, lend thy light.
With the angels let us sing
hallelujahs to our King,
Jesus Christ is here.

Stille nacht! Heilige Nacht! Joseph Mohr (1792-1848)

Luke 2:1-7 Read by Julie

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Mavis shares a favourite poem and Chris plays the tune

Come, children, come quickly, yes children come all.

Joseph and the shepherds

Midnight in Bethlehem, Zero AD.

One or two people in difficulty.

Out on the street with a donkey and
wife

Joseph had reached a bad point in his
life

with the kind of a problem that won't
go away:

a woman in labour, and nowhere to
stay.

Now the root of it all, when you

boiled the thing down,

was too many people in too small a town.

When they dreamed up the plan of administration

for a poll tax on all of the Jewish nation

only a bureaucrat somewhere like Rome

would send everyone back to their ancestors' home,

for little old Bethlehem wasn't designed

to cater for David's prolific line.

Still the problem was there and he couldn't disown it:

they'd left it too late, and Joseph had blown it.

If they'd finished the packing the evening before

and not gone back to check that they'd locked the front door—

if they'd not missed the turning at that roundabout—

if they'd filled up the donkey before they set out—

if they hadn't agreed to call in and see



all of Mary's relations at Bethany—
or if only he'd booked by Israeli Express
that would have done nicely—but this was a mess.
No room at the inn. No room anywhere.
They gave him the only place they could spare
and the promised Messiah was born that night
on the floor of a stable without any light
where they cut the cord and cleaned up the mess
and wrapped him in somebody's workaday dress
and while Mary slept there, exhausted and cold,
Joseph sat by feeling helpless and old.
This wasn't the way he had thought it would be
when the angel had told him that destiny
chose them to look after the Holy One.
No, this was a farce. What God had done
was to trust the care of the Saviour instead
to a man who could not even find him a bed.
If only he'd planned it more carefully then.
If he only could go back and do it again.
He turned round in his mind the ways he had blundered—
then he looked at the infant and suddenly wondered
if it all was a lie, if he was a fool
and the object of everyone's ridicule,
if the dreams of the angels were tricks and not
what they promised to be, and his anger grew hot
when the shepherds burst in all breathless and wild
and stopped in their tracks when they saw the child.
They shifted their gaze from the baby's bed

and their eyes met his, and he nodded his head,
standing awkwardly, not knowing quite what to do
now they all knew for certain the story was true.
They stayed there for minutes. It might have been years.
Not one of them spoke. Their hopes and their fears
were gathered around this helpless God
as their minds tried to grasp what it meant. Where he stood
Joseph was silent as finally
he saw this was how it was planned to be,
that the smell and the dark and the dirt and the pain
were not Joseph's mistake but God's choice once again:
past midnight in Bethlehem, Joseph knew
that men would be saved despite all they might do.
He could not control it. He did not understand.
He felt like a baby himself in God's hand.
He thought of his anger and flushed now with shame.
He remembered the angel had said that his name
would be Jesus, God saves.
He glanced up and saw
that the shepherds had gone. Day had dawned. From the floor
Mary gazed at him, quizzical, on her straw bed.
The tiny God-child cried out to be fed.
Joseph moved to the business of the new day,
gave the child to its mother, the donkey some hay.

It is more or less certain that Jesus wasn't born in 0 AD (more likely sometime between 5BC and 2BC), and 0 AD doesn't exist anyway as the calendar goes from 1 BC to 1 AD, and these days it's considered correct to call them 1 BCE and 1 CE, but hey, it's a poem.

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Away in a Manger
Introduced by Joyce

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 bedside till morning is nigh.

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.

Sometimes attributed to John Thomas Macfarland (1851-1913)

Luke 2:8-20 Read by Hollie

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

We gather round the manger bed. Introduced by Hayden

Matthew 2:1-12 Read by Dacia

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place

where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Coventry Carol (Lully, lulla)
Chosen and introduced by Tara

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,
By by, lully lullay.
O sisters too,
How may we do
For to preserve this day?
This poor youngling,
For whom we sing,
By by, lully lullay!
Chorus

Herod, the king,
In his raging,
Chargèd he hath this day
His men of might,
In his own sight,
All young children to slay.
Chorus

That woe is me,
Poor child for thee!
And ever morn and may,
For thy parting
Neither say nor sing
By by, lully lullay!

A prayer

Father, you are everlasting;

You are the light for the nations.

Arise and shine in and through me, for the night grows long.

Give me Patience and strength to be faithful

Until the light of Your kingdom fills the sky.

By your grace and according to your mercy,

Open the eyes of those who walk in darkness.

Help me not be the one who constantly runs into the safety of the light.

Give me boldness to proclaim the light I have found in You in the darkest places. Amen

The bells ring out at Christmas time - Sweet Chiming Bells
Chosen and played by John and Joy

John 1:1-14 Read by Joyce

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God —

13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Welcome

The answer is "4."

What's the question? That's right, "How many shopping days left until Christmas?"

So, are you ready? Have you bought all your gifts yet? Is your Christmas tree up, your house all decorated? Are your stockings hung by the chimney with care? In other words, are you "prepared to welcome Christmas"?

If you are hoping for a dinner on Christmas day at Ramsgate Salvation Army – so far all we have is the potatoes – and that's because we got lots given to us by Tesco.. I think there may be some cranberry sauce left over from last year.

That's not the only sign that we are not ready yet

In the Whitewood home there is no tree, no lights, no cards hanging from strings, no holly wreath on the door....and we don't even have the potatoes yet.

As usual, we are not prepared to welcome Christmas.

Do feel sorry for Heather – she dreams that one day we will be like other families. I imagine she dreams about lots of ways in which we could be more normal.

I read a story of another lady who woke up a couple days before Christmas and told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a diamond necklace for Christmas. What do you think that means?"

"Oh," her husband replied, "you'll know the day after tomorrow."

The next morning, she told her husband that she had the same dream again. To which her husband gave her the same reply again. Likewise, she informed her husband of the same thing on the third morning, Christmas Eve, asking what he thought the dream might mean. This time he replied with a smile, “You’ll know tomorrow!”

And so it was on Christmas day the husband presented his wife with a small, beautifully decorated package. She was elated and opened the present with great anticipation to discover...a small book entitled, *The Meaning of Dreams*.

I hope the link is not too obscure but I keep thinking back to the risk that Joseph took in taking Mary as his wife and being the support she needed. What would have happened if he had not welcomed Jesus. If he had not understood the dream – and acted upon it. Yet I don’t think we often recognise Joseph as an example of welcome.

Joyce shared those incredible words from John’s gospel. They are so well known and we hear them every Christmas. There is a danger they become so familiar that their depth may be lost on us.

This morning, I just want to pick up on one verse in the passage: verse 11: “He came to his own, and his own people did not accept him”.

At that first Christmas, the Word became flesh. God walked among us, full of grace and truth. But there is a sadness in this too because, as John reminds us, “He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.”

The Son of God became visible to us and walked among us at Bethlehem. But the great tragedy of history is that he was not accepted or recognised.

“His own people did not accept him”. His own people, did not accept him. From the very beginning, with King Herod trying to kill him, through his period as a refugee in Egypt, through his ministry with opposition from Pharisees and

Sadducees, through to his crucifixion on Good Friday, “His own people did not accept him”.

The Christmas story, sadly, is the story of the unwelcome Christ. “He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.”

So this morning Ramsgate Salvation Army the question before us is whether we will accept him and welcome him into our lives.

Welcoming Christ into the world, into the church, into our lives, is what Christmas is all about. Welcoming Christ is actually at the heart of the Christmas story.

Christ was welcomed in at his birth – by Joseph

Then there is the inn keeper - I came across a wonderful line this week that is so powerful

"Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus."



"We desire to be able to welcome Jesus at Christmas-time, not in a cold manger of our heart, but in a heart full of love and humility, in a heart so pure, so immaculate, so warm with love for one another."

Tradition has clouded the actual welcome that Jesus received, was it a barn, a cave, the outer room when the animals were kept? – we don't know. But what we do know is that having been rejected by those who might have been able to help – someone did provide a welcome.

And then the shepherds came from the fields; men of poverty with humble jobs and a lowly status in society - and they too welcomed Christ.

Ironically, and somewhat embarrassingly, it seems that the humble and lowly houseowner welcomed Christ, the humble and lowly shepherds welcomed Christ - but the holy and religious people of God did not welcome him.

What a challenge to our comfort and complacency this story is! This is an upside-down story – it does not work how we think it should. Surely the priests and the religious people should be there to welcome Christ - but no - It is the lowly, the poor and the marginalised who recognise the Messiah for who he truly is.

God is not found in our religiosity. God meets us in our humility and poverty of spirit. Welcoming Christ is something we do out of our poverty of spirit; where we say, “Lord, I don’t have much to give you...I’m not very righteous, in fact I get so much wrong in my life...Lord, I don’t have much to offer you at all, but what I have, you can have...”

That is the type of welcome that Jesus wants. The welcome of the lowly guesthouse. The welcome of the poor shepherds. It seems almost too twee, almost too obvious, to quote from Christina Rossetti’s poem called, ‘What can I give him?’ But we all know the words:

“What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; If I were a wise man, I would do my part. Yet what I can I give him – give my heart”

That’s all he wants...

John writes, “He came to his own, and his own people did not accept him”. Let’s not be those people this morning. Let’s welcome Christ – in the only way we know how - by giving him our hearts this Christmas time.

This morning , my prayer for all of us is that we find room in our hearts to welcome him, whether it is amid peace or Christmas chaos, and that his deep love for us spreads through our hearts and our lives in meaningful and life-giving ways.

In the bleak mid-winter
Chosen by Jan

In the bleak mid-winter,
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter,
Long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold Him,
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God incarnate,
Jesus Christ.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man,
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him-
Give Him my heart.

Christina G Rossetti (1830-1894)

I just want to finish with another challenge to welcome Jesus this Christmas.

I have really enjoyed watching and hearing the carols, scripture and poetry our family have shared. We can be in no doubt that today we have been preparing ourselves to remember again the coming of God into our world as a tiny baby,

But there are two other “comings” that we celebrate, too.

The second coming is the return of Jesus in glory at the end of time.

We are told very clearly “Stay awake and be prepared because at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” This could seem like a threat and fill us with fear, but in reality it is meant to fill us with encouragement and hope. Jesus is motivating us not to wait till tomorrow or the next day but to be the people we want to be here and now, to start living the life we want to live today and not in some distant future. He urges us not to delay in being good to one another, actively caring for the poor, praying a little more, and living more positively. Jesus doesn’t just want us to live as God wants tomorrow. He wants us to live God’s dream for our lives TODAY.

This is where the third coming of Jesus happens: today. Between His first coming as a baby in Bethlehem and His second coming in glory at the end of time is His third coming, gently, peacefully, but truly and surely, in our midst every day. Jesus comes to us in our friend in the hospital, in the person who gets on your nerves, in our noisy neighbour, in our demanding boss.

Jesus also comes to us in the love of our family, an act of kindness towards a stranger, the comfort of a Christmas carol, the thoughtfulness of gift-giving, and the joy of knowing – even through your computer screen, this printed word or the DVD, that your church family are with you

So as we prepare to celebrate once again this year the coming of the Child Jesus at Christmas, and as we prepare for his second ultimate coming at the end of time, let’s take time to notice how Jesus wants to come to us in this third coming that we can so often miss: here and now, in the busyness and in the stillness of our everyday lives. Jesus is coming to see you this week, are you ready to welcome Him?

Oh come all ye faithful
Chosen and introduced by Angela

O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him,
born the King of angels:
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

God of God,
Light of light,
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
very God,
begotten, not created:

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
'Glory to God
in the highest:'

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given:
word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing:

Benediction for Christmas
(based on Isaiah 9:2-7)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in deepest night, are lit up with a brilliant sight.
Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.
The spread of his influence and of his peace will never end.
Therefore, go out into the world with great joy,
and the grace of Bethlehem's matchless Child,
the love of the God who never ceases to amaze,
and the fellowship of the Spirit who never wearies,

will be with you this morning and evermore.

Who is He?

Chosen and introduced by Keith

Who is he, in yonder stall,
at whose feet the shepherds fall?

'Tis the Lord! O wondrous story!
'Tis the Lord, the King of glory!
At his feet we humbly fall;
Crown him, crown him Lord of all!

Who is he in deep distress,
fasting in the wilderness?

Who is he to whom they bring
all the sick and sorrowing?

Who is he on yonder tree
dies in shame and agony?

Who is he that from the grave
comes to heal and help and save?

Who is he that from his throne
rules through all the world alone?

Benjamin Russell Hanby (1833-1867)

Christmas Carols



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A STARRY NIGHT
AWAY IN A MANGER
BRIGHTEST AND BEST
CALYPSO CAROL
CHRISTIANS AWAKE
DING DONG

HARK THE HERALD
INFANT HOLY
JOY TO THE WORLD
LITTLE DONKEY
MARYS BOY CHILD
O HOLY NIGHT

ONCE IN ROYAL
ROCKING CAROL
SILENT NIGHT
THE FIRST NOWELL
WHILE SHEPHERDS
WATCHED
WHO IS HE