

Dorset South & West Circuit Written Service.  
'Hush The Hushing.'  
Sunday 29th December 2024  
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.



### Call to Worship. Opening liturgy

Old and young, rich and poor, hale and frail, Near and far, remembered and forgotten, Neighbours, family, friends and strangers,  
**Let's share the song, With angels let us sing.**  
Let's listen to each other's singing of that song, The old familiar words that take us back, The 'new take' that gives fresh light,  
**Let's share the song, With angels let us sing.**  
Together, you and me and they and them, And he and she, from here and there, And everywhere and always,  
**Let's share the song, With angels let us sing.**

### STF 330

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!  
Let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains

repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

### Prayers of adoration and confession

As we come to worship God on this last Sunday of the year, we pray. God of the past, the present, and the future, we give thanks to you for the gift of worship, singing, praying, and hearing how you lead us toward a faith-filled future. At the end of each year, we reflect on all that has been experienced in our lives, moments of joy and wonder, times of anxiety and confusion. Throughout it all we are grateful for your love and guidance. As we approach a new year we praise you for your continued presence. We thank you for the Good News of Jesus Christ, the message of His coming that never ages and is relevant and present in every age. The good news that you are there to comfort the lonely, minister to the suffering, welcoming everyone into your wonderful love. As the old year fades and a new year dawns we have much to celebrate and to bring before you, so we offer our thanks and praises. **Amen.**

### Prayer of Confession

Heavenly Father all of Creation is the work of your artistic hands. We know that we have a blank canvas of a new year before us, filled with promise and possibility. We also know that the blank canvas of a new year can be like an illusion. Time ticks on, moment after moment, day after day, month after month. There are times that we are remarkable and generous, yet far too often we can succumb to selfishness and individualism. Forgive us, restore us, and guide us. Be a reminder to us when we seek only to look after our treasured abundance while others are left with so little. In the Spirit of your generosity, allow us the courage to share all that we have, all that we do, and all that we are in your name. So that we might together paint a bright and beautiful picture on the blank canvas you have given us. **Amen.**

### Assurance of Forgiveness

Let us hear the Good News and live into the promise that we are forgiven. We are now free to create something new! Let us commit ourselves to being open, generous, inviting, and always seeking the faithful path before us. Thanks be to God! **Amen**

### Bible reading:

#### Luke 2:41-52 . The Boy Jesus in temple

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been

anxiously searching for you.” “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

### **Reflection**

Four days on from celebrating Christ’s birth and we are thinking about him as a boy of twelve going to the temple as he would have done with his parents every year. He seems to have given his family an anxious time and yet we read the almost familiar words about Mary. ‘But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.’ Something similar happened when the shepherds came to the stable to see the child and to tell them what the angels had said. Mary seems to have a precious memory store.

I guess soon the Christmas trees will be packed away for another year and precious ornaments carefully wrapped to keep them secure. I wonder how many of those decorations have precious memories attached? Perhaps some are really past their best, but they have memories that never fade. Maybe made by a child who now has their own children? Or a treasured ornament that a loved one adored. I have a little vintage glass trumpet and French horn that is definitely looking less than it’s original best. I remember how my mother loved those glass ornaments and they would be wrapped in red or green crepe paper and carefully stored year after year. My dad would always have to pretend to play them with my mum telling him to be careful! While we children encouraged him to keep pretending to play them! It was a part of the Christmas tradition of dressing the tree and uniting us as a family. Precious memories and I am sure you have your own keepsakes that have precious memories.

However do you notice that Mary’s precious memories are not rooted in things but in words. Words of hope and encouragement. Words about faith and faith in the future. We have been using the Methodist material, ‘hush the noise’, throughout Advent and Christmas and it’s definitely in those times when we can hush out the noise that the memories come back to warm and encourage us.

Soon the ‘noise of life’ will be about a kind of new year’s purge and New Year’s resolutions . Most will be about diet, fitness and finances. The discussion about how long will they last is all part of the noise! One study found that most people gave up their New Year’s resolutions within a month. Possibly because they were taking on too big a challenge or were too vague about their goals.

Let’s consider the words of St Paul in Colossians 3:12-17:

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wow there is plenty in there to inspire some New Year’s resolutions. A change of outlook. Being thankful, forgiving. I wonder what words stood out for you?

What about, ‘teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit,’? Two thoughts, I have a number of ‘read the bible in a year’, books. Have I ever completed any? The desire was there but! The second thought is how many times I have taken what I thought were moving deeply spiritual services and not one person has commented. Then again how many times have I been guilty of doing exactly the same thing as a member of a congregation. We listen, we are moved but do we do anything about it or share our thoughts to encourage others?

Coming back to the boy Jesus in the temple. He not only listened but he discussed, he asked questions and he listened. So often we ask questions that we already know what we think the answer should be. Do we listen? Mary, twice, we are told pondered all these things in her heart. To do that you have to be open to listen, to hear what has been said and to consider it, ponder over it. I am sure that treasuring fed her way of life. To put on the kind of life style that St Paul commends. Most likely without even noticing the change of heart.

Now just imagine a different scenario to our gospel story. Mary and Joseph find Jesus and after telling him about the upset he has caused his reaction is typical of many a young person entering their teens. A shrug and half hearted apology! Remember we read the story knowing that Jesus is the Son of God, so perhaps it is hard to think that he might just behave like I have described! The journey home and the coming days would have been very different. How often have we been challenged about our behaviour and we know we are wrong but we just shrug it off like a petulant teenager?

Considering the actual story as the scripture recounts it, things are changing decidedly in the Holy family. We might think that the boy Jesus is growing up, but actually it is his parents that are growing up. To understanding what this special person is going to do for the whole world.

Children have a way of making us see the world through fresh eyes. I treasure those memories of children pointing out things that I would never have noticed or given a second thought to. They are so full of wonder and delight. Life with all its disharmony has not tarnished their vision of our world full of joy and wonder. Jesus explains to his earthly family that “I must be in my Father’s house?” Jesus is telling Mary she should have known where he was. It is as if he is saying, “Remember, the angel told you I would be the Son of God. Remember that night in Bethlehem. Angels praising God, shepherds glorifying God. Remember the three men from the East, their gifts, and adoration. Remember Joseph’s dreams that guided us to Egypt and back. Where else could I be but here?” Jesus has put the Father at the centre of his world and asks Mary and us to do the same, to move to the Father’s house.

Growth almost always involves letting go. Mary’s move to the Father’s house, her growing up, means that she will have to let go of her “boy Jesus”. Jesus was born of Mary but he is the Father’s Son. He is with her but does not belong to her. She can give him love but not her thoughts or ways. He is about the Father’s business. Ultimately, she must strive to be like him and not make him like her.\*

Jesus has moved from Mary and Joseph’s home to the Father’s home. This is not a rejection of his earthly parents but a re-prioritising of relationships. It is what he would ask of Simon and Andrew, James and John.

“Follow me” would be the invitation for them to leave their homes, their nets, their fathers and move to a different place, live a different life, see with different eyes. It is the question he still puts to you and me.

Growing up spiritually involves leaving our comfort zone, letting go of what is safe and familiar, and moving to a bigger place, to the Father’s place. This letting go is a necessary detachment if we are to grow in the love and likeness of Christ. It means we must leave our own little homes.

We all live in many different homes. Homes of fear, anger, and prejudice. Homes of grief and sorrow. Homes in which we have been told or convinced that we don’t matter, that we are not enough, unacceptable, or unloveable. Homes in which we have been or continue to be hurt or wounded. Homes in which we have hurt or wounded another. Homes of indifference and apathy. Homes of sin and guilt. Homes of gossip, envy, pride. Every one of us could name the different homes in which we live, homes that keep our life small, our visions narrow, and our world empty. The problem is that sometimes we have become too comfortable in these homes. They are not our true homes. They are not the home God offers us. We may have to pass through them but we do not have to stay there. New year is a time of decluttering. Letting go of things that don’t bring us joy. The clutter is like an unholy noise that prevents us living our best lives.

Jesus says that there is not only another home for us but invites, guides, and grows us up into that home. It is a place he knows well. It is the Father’s home in which we can know ourselves and each other to be his beloved children, created in his image and called to be like him. So why would we continue to pay rent on a place that can only impoverish us when we could move to the Father’s home for free? In the Father’s home our place at the banquet is set. It is a home in which we live in rooms of mercy, forgiveness, joy, love, beauty, generosity, compassion. Without the clutter of those things that we should have dealt with long before. Leaving home does not necessarily mean leaving our physical or geographical home though sometimes it might. It does mean examining and re-prioritising the values, beliefs, and relationships that establish our identity and give our life meaning and significance.

It means letting go of an identity that is limited to our biological family, job, community reputation, ethnic group, or political party and trusting that who we are is who we are in God. It means that we stop relating to one another by comparison, competition, and judgment and begin relating through love, self-surrender, and vulnerability. It means that we let go of fear about the future and discover that God is here in the present and that all shall be well. We stop ruminating on past guilt, regrets, and sins and accept the mercy and forgiveness of God and each other. We see our life not in opposition to others but as intimately related to and dependent upon others.

I wonder what the boy Jesus heard from the temple teachers? What did they discuss and what did he listen to? Do you see how even the Son of God, managed to hush the noise and to listen. As we step into a new year of possibilities, may we question and discuss with our Heavenly Father and most of all listen, hush our inner thoughts and noises. Clear out the unnecessary and hold onto the good. That we too might have much that is enriching to ponder about in our hearts. A happy and joyous new year to us all. **Amen.**

**Hymn** Often sung with the hymn (Now the green blade rises from the buried grain StF 306)

As the old year passes  
we look back, reflect:  
times of joy and promise,  
times we’d best forget.  
God of the ages  
help us walk your way.  
Help us greet your future,  
seize tomorrow’s day

As the old year passes  
sorrow wells within:  
loved ones no more ‘round us,  
all that could have been.  
God of compassion  
heal each ailing heart.  
Guide us to your future  
where new life may start

As the old year passes  
we cry for our struggling world.  
Climate ever-changing,  
fighting too-often heard.  
Jesus, you call us  
to cherish all you give.  
Call us to your future  
where all in peace, might live

As the new year dawns  
now we would give you praise.  
Faithful God, come lead us  
onward in new ways.  
We'll love and serve you  
in the faith of Christ,  
in your Spirit's future;  
people of new life.

### Prayers of Intercession

At the end of the old year, let us pray for people everywhere and in every kind of need.

We pray for your church across the world and here in our Circuit. We think of the ways that the church has been active in this past year. The accomplishments and the challenges. As we enter into a new year may we be people of faith and continue to learn to live in harmony and mutual respect, recognising our similarities and celebrating our differences. May this be the year when we keep our resolutions to be faithful in our Christian lives, to let our love shine forth and to live less for ourselves and more for others.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all in authority. We reflect on the changes and challenges faced in the past year by all in positions of power and government. We pray that the new year may be the year when they seek to continue to govern with wisdom, mercy and respect for all humanity. We pray for all who suffer indignity, deprivation, starvation, fear or loss of freedom at the hands of others. We pray that this coming year will be the year when people who live with war may find peace and those who suffer oppression may find freedom. May lessons be learned by all of us from the mistakes and misfortunes of the past year.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are without faith, hope or love. We pray for those who are sick, desperate or bereaved and for those who care for them and seek to bring them relief from their suffering. Give them the strength and courage to carry on, and hope for the future. We pray especially for all those known to us who are in special need of our prayers, and we remember them now in a moment of silence ...

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can quench. We remember before God those who have died and thank God for every remembrance of them. We take a moment to remember those known personally to us....

You turn our darkness into light: in your light shall we see light. Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen. We say the Lord's Prayer.**

### STF 639

Through the love of God our Saviour  
all will be well.

Free and changeless is his favour;  
all, all is well.

Precious is the blood that healed us,  
perfect is the grace that sealed us,  
strong the hand stretched forth to shield us;  
all must be well.

Though we pass through tribulation,  
all will be well.

Christ has purchased full salvation,  
all, all is well.

Happy still in God confiding,  
fruitful, if in Christ abiding,  
holy, through the Spirit's guiding;  
all must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow;  
all will be well.

Faith can sing through days of sorrow  
all, all is well.

On our Father's love relying,  
Jesus every need supplying,  
then in living or in dying,  
all must be well.

### The Blessing

The angels are still singing.

Hush the noise, hear them sing, repeat the song,  
welcome everyone.

And the blessing of God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be ours, now and always. **Amen.**

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