

**Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit**

**Worship at Home**

**Sunday 3<sup>RD</sup> January 2021**

**Welcome to worship with the Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit.**

Welcome to worship on Covenant Sunday.

**Call to Worship**

Jesus said ' I am the Light of the World'

**StF 224**

As with gladness men of old  
did the guiding star behold,  
as with joy they hailed its light,  
leading onward, beaming bright,  
so, most gracious Lord, may we  
evermore be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped,  
Saviour, to thy lowly bed,  
there to bend the knee before  
thee, whom heaven and earth adore,  
so may we with willing feet  
ever seek thy mercy-seat.

As they offered gifts most rare  
at thy cradle rude and bare,  
so may we with holy joy,  
pure, and free from sin's alloy,  
all our costliest treasures bring,  
Christ, to thee, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day  
keep us in the narrow way;  
and, when earthly things are past,  
bring our ransomed souls at last  
where they need no star to guide,  
where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright  
Need they no created light;  
Thou its light, its joy, its crown,  
Thou its sun which goes not down;  
There forever may we sing  
alleluias to our King.

Tune: Dix from chorale by Conrad Kocher 1786 -1872  
Words William Chatterton Dix 1837-1898

**Let us pray**

Glory to the Father, the God of love, who created us; who continually preserves and sustains us; who has loved us with an everlasting love and given us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

Glory to Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, though he was rich, yet for our sake became poor, and was tested in every way as we are, yet without sin; who proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross; alive for ever, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who trust in him; who is seated at God's right hand in glory and will come to be our judge.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

Glory to the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, by whom we are born into the family of God and made members of the body of Christ; whose witness confirms us; whose wisdom teaches us; whose power enables us; who will do for us more than we can ask or think.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be praise and glory for ever.

God of grace, through the mediation of your Son, you call us into a new covenant. Help us therefore to draw near with faith and join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

**Reading**

**Matthew 2 v 1 – 12 (KJV)**

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.'

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him 'In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.'

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said 'Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.'

When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

### **Reflection: A Methodist Way of Life**

We are at the turn of the year. We have closed the door on 2020 yet the year of pandemic has consequences that will stay with us for some considerable time, certainly well beyond 2021. Therefore, as we commence this new year, we need a new sense of well-being and hope for today and the future. To that end' the journey of the Magi may well provide some pointers.

### **Worship**

To begin, the Magi from the East were stargazers, astronomers seeking signs in the

stars. They were invited by King Herod to "search diligently for the newborn child." During this past year, scientists have been searching diligently for a vaccine to combat the pandemic and thankfully a number of vaccines are coming on stream, thus enabling the possibility of a new norm to be found later in the year.

The wise men, we find, were curious enough to leave all behind and make a journey of exploration seeking to discover that unknown truth about life which lay beyond their wealth and prosperity. They were ultimately to find the Christ-child, who unlocks the true meaning to life. They returned home another way, changed by their pilgrimage and encounter with Jesus. Likewise, during Advent and Christmastide, we have had opportunities to make a similar journey, bringing change and transition to the purpose of our lives.

### **Learning and Caring**

On the Andrew Marr show, after the USA Presidential election, senator Chris Coons made some telling remarks about the need to *resource, re-engage and re-imagine*. These three Rs invite us all to ask ourselves what individual and church *resources* we currently have which may well be different from twelve months ago. Secondly how are we to *re-engage* with those resources, now that we are all a year older than we were then. Thirdly, and this may be the most demanding of the three questions, how can we *re-imagine* using those resources with which we re-engage differently to best effect in the new year? None of these 3Rs in the present climate should prove easy and can challenge us to learn new tricks in tackling old ways and habits. Thus, we may well be aided by Dorothy and the story of the Wizard of Oz.

### **Service and Evangelism**

In the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy is the Christ figure who meets a scarecrow, a tin man and a lion on the journey. One is made of straw and doesn't think he has a brain, another doesn't think he has a heart and is prone to tears whilst the final character has lost his roar and his courage. To some extent, the pandemic means we can identify with these three characters. For example, we may be afraid of the pandemic, we may have lost heart, or perhaps we have lost our sense of

character. As pilgrims we need to press on, not to Oz, but to God, aided and abetted by other pilgrims on the way. Of course, the song *Somewhere over the Rainbow* inspires hope, especially as we recall the rainbow is God's covenant sign to Noah and all creation.

### **Conclusion**

At the turn of this new year, the covenant God made known in Jesus Christ calls us all to resource, re-engage and re-imagine ourselves and the church, as together we travel in hope. Together may we think anew, find new heart and instill a fresh sense of courage which in turn builds character. As the wise men returned home another way, may we, having celebrated Christmas and Epiphany, be bold to embrace a Methodist Way of Life as God's rainbow people in the world. **Amen.**

Rev Keith M Phipps

### **The Covenant**

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law.

The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience.

In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God.

We meet, therefore, as generations have met before us, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God.

God of mercy, we confess our sins ....

**Lord, forgive.**

**Have mercy on me, O God, in your constant love; in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences. Wash away all my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin.**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**

**Give me the joy of your help again and strengthen me with a willing spirit.**

**'Your sins are forgiven.' Amen. Thanks be to God.**

Let us make our Covenant

Sisters and brothers in Christ, let us again accept our place within this covenant which God has made with us and with all who are called to be Christ's disciples.

**I am no longer my own but yours. Your will, not mine, be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none; when I am troubled, and when I am at peace.**

**Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfillment and when it is lacking; when I have all things, and when I have nothing.**

**I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose.**

**Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. May it be so forever. Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven. Amen.**

### **Prayers of intercession**

As we have entered this covenant not for ourselves alone, but as God's servants and witnesses, let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Loving God, hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:

**make us all one, that the world may believe.**

Inspire and lead all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world:

**establish justice and peace among all people.**

Have compassion on all who suffer from any sickness, grief or trouble:

**deliver them from their distress.**

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory:

**bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.**

Let us pray in silence for our own needs and for those of others ...

Silence

Lord our God, you have helped us by your grace to make these prayers, and you have promised through Christ our Lord that when two or three agree in his name you will grant what they ask. Answer now your servants' prayers according to their needs; in this world grant that we may truly know you, and in the world to come graciously give us eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name:  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done;  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever, **Amen**

**StF 465**

**Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,**

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty;  
hold me with Thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore;  
feed me now and evermore.

Open thou the crystal fountain  
whence the healing stream shall flow;  
let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through:  
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
be thou still my strength and shield;  
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
death of death, and hell's destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side:  
songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to thee;  
I will ever give to thee.

Words: William Williams (1717-1791)  
Trans Peter Williams (1727-1796)

Tune : CWM RHONDDA  
Music: John Hughes of Pontypridd (1873-1932)

**A Blessing**

Howard Thurman the Christmas Card 'Christmas begins'  
Bread of Tomorrow Janet Morley SPCK 1992

When the song of the angels is stilled  
when the star in the sky is gone  
when the kings and princes are home  
when the shepherds are back with their flocks  
the work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost,  
to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among the people,  
to make music in the heart

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you and with those whom you love on earth and in heaven, now and always,

**Amen.**

Information about **A Methodist Way of Life** will be available with your Membership ticket or else look online at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life>