



PARISH OF CUMNOR



**A Service of Remembrance,
Light and Hope
for Dark Times**

Sunday 12th December 4pm

Welcome to this service for the longest night, when we acknowledge the darkness but also the light of Christ that shines in the darkest places and can never be extinguished.

Christmas is usually accompanied by the expectation of festivity and fun. But that's not how it feels for many people.

This has been another difficult year with the pandemic, but many of us face additional issues, some related, some not: so many losses.

You may be enduring the loss of a loved one; someone special has died, and you miss them. Perhaps we remember a bereavement from many years ago, a sense of loss which doesn't end. Maybe you remember a baby who was not able to have an independent life and died before or at birth.

Maybe you are watching life or vitality gradually ebbing from someone dear to you. Maybe you are facing estrangement through the loss of a relationship, maybe economic hardships through the loss of a job.

Perhaps you just feel the need for space to be honest about your feelings or want to support other people.

Whatever the reason, wherever you are, come as you are, and you are very welcome. We hope you find the space and hope the Christmas story offers as light in the darkest night.

Words of Blessing:

Come Light of Life

Lighten our darkness with your mighty word of love.

Lighten our hearts with the joy of your coming

Lighten our world with the hope that faith in you brings

And may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you, with those you love and those for whom you pray and remain with you always.

Amen

Please stay for refreshments after the service.

The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys, new possibilities. In your name we pray. **Amen**

Carol: In the bleak midwinter

**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 Almighty, 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 can I give Him – give my heart.**

We meet in the name of a loving God,

**All: Who knows our needs,
Hears our cries
And heals our wounds.**

Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear.
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.***

**O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer,
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
*[Refrain]***

**O come, thou key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
*[Refrain]***

Come God-with-us

All: Come God-with-us:

Who braves our rejection and hurt,
Who holds us in acceptance and love.

All: Come, God-for-us:

Who whispers in our ears, that each of us are beloved
children.

All: Come God-under-us:

Who cradles is in arms that never grow weary;
Whose lap has room for all.

All: Come, God-over-us:

Who watches in the long silence of the night,
that we might rest in peace.

All: Come, God-beside-us:

Who steadies us when we falter,
Who lifts us up when we fall.

All: Come, God-behind-us:

Who picks up all the faded dreams we drop along the
way, and patchworks them into hope.

All: O come, O come Emmanuel:

And we will rejoice for ever.

Thom Schum

Candles at the Crib

I invite you to come forwards to light a candle for whoever
you are remembering today, symbolising your love.

Whoever, whatever we want to lay at the crib today, we
remember that in the messiness, in the difficulties of life,
the light of Christ does shine in the darkness and the
darkness cannot overcome it.

(Please feel free to come up to light candles)

But we remember too that, as the darkest night passes,
so the days start to get longer, the light brighter. The night
is darkest just before dawn, and so we wait in hope and
love.

Lord, it is night.

The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done;

what has not been done has not been done

- let it be.

The night is dark.

Let our fears of the darkness of the world and our own
lives rest in you.

The night is quiet.

Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us, and all who have no peace.

**Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
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.**

Reading: The Word became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, glory of the Only Begotten, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hymn: Within our darkest night (Taizé)

**Within our darkest night,
You kindle the fire that never dies away,
That never dies away.
Within our darkest night,
You kindle the fire that never dies away,
That never dies away.**

Reading: The Prophet Isaiah foretells the birth of Jesus

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. 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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Candlelighting – the Advent wreath

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.

We are used to lighting the candles of the advent wreath in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Tonight, we light the four candles in honour of our loved ones. We light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories, and one for our love.

The first candle represents our grief. We own the pain of losing loved ones, of dreams that go unfulfilled, of hopes that evaporate in despair.

[Brief silence follows.]

The second candle represents our courage. It symbolizes the courage to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, to share our feelings honestly and openly with each other, and to dare to hope in the midst of pain.

[silence]

The third candle represents our memories. For the times we laughed together, cried together, were angry with each other or overjoyed with each other. We light this candle for the memories of caring and joy we shared together.

[silence]

The fourth candle represents our love. The love we have given, and the love we have received. The love that has gone unacknowledged and unfelt, and the love that has been shared in times of joy and sorrow.

[silence]

We light the Christ candle, remembering that Jesus Christ is always in the centre of our lives. He hears our cries, he knows our hearts and, in the midst of all our thoughts and emotions, he offers us hope and healing.

Amen

Lord, come to your people.
In your mercy set us free.

Unlooked for, Christ comes.
Loving God, we pray for our community ...
In the midst of our everyday lives,
surprise us with glimpses of your glorious, humble love,
at the heart of existence.
Lord, come to your people.
In your mercy set us free.

Longed for, Christ comes.
Loving God, we pray for those whose lives are hard and painful
or whose existence is sorrowful, bitter or empty ...
In their need, may they know your healing touch,
reaching out to comfort, strengthen and restore.
Lord, come to your people.
In your mercy set us free.

Loving God, come to us now
as you have come to your people in every age,
as we gather our thoughts in the words the adult Christ
taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

A reflective prayer by Carol Dixon:

You came as a baby, Lord.
As a helpless little child
Who relied on a human family to care for you.
You cried because you were hungry, because you were
homeless,
because you were far away from home.

You still cry with hunger, Lord,
In the voices of many that are starving;
Your tears still flow:
For the homeless
The lonely
The forgotten.
You still rely on human families to care for you.

And so this Christmas, Lord, we pray:
Help us to be the kind of people
Who look for you in the world,
And joyfully discover you as we care for one another.

Amen

© Carol Dixon

Carol: O Little Town of Bethlehem

**O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth,
The everlasting light,
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.**

**O morning stars, together,
Proclaim the Holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.
For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the Angels keep,
Their watch of wondering love.**

**How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His Heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.**

**O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas Angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.**

Reading: The birth of Jesus

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. He went there to register with Mary, who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

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 forever, and love me I pray,
Bless all the dear children,
in Thy tender care,
And fit us for Heaven
to live with Thee there.**