



# The Abbey Church of the Holy Cross Pershore

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## Light in our Darkness

### Welcome and Introduction

We come in this Service to God

**In our need, and bringing with us the needs of the world.**

We come to you, for you come to us in Jesus

**And you know by experience what human life is like.**

We come with our faith and with our doubts;

**We come with our hopes and with our fears.**

We come as we are, because you invite us to come

**And you have promised never to turn us away**

### Hymn

Percy Dearmer (1867-1936)

1. Jesus, good above all other,  
gentle child of gentle mother,  
in a stable born our brother,  
give us grace to persevere.

2. Jesus, cradled in a manger,  
for us facing every danger,  
living as a homeless stranger,  
make we thee our King most dear.

3. Jesus, for thy people dying,  
risen Master, death defying,  
Lord in heaven, thy grace supplying  
keep us to thy presence near.

4. Jesus, who our sorrows bearest,  
all our thoughts and hopes thou sharest,  
thou to us the truth declarest;  
help us all thy truth to hear.

5. Lord in all our doings guide us;  
pride and hate shall ne'er divide us;  
we'll go on with thee beside us,  
and with joy we'll persevere.

(German carol melody  
adapted Ralph Vaughan Williams)

## **Prayer of Penitence:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: 'Anyone who comes to me I will never turn away.'  
In the presence of God, let us confess our sins.

*Silence*

Lord Jesus, you came to reconcile us to God and to one another,

Lord have mercy      **Lord have mercy**

Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of sin and division,

Christ have mercy      **Christ have mercy**

Lord Jesus, you offer us a new beginning,

Lord have mercy      **Lord have mercy**

*Silence*

God is love, through Jesus our sins are forgiven. Let us live in the power of the Spirit.

**Amen**

## **Collect**

Heavenly Father, you anointed your Son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit and with power to bring to us all the blessings of your Kingdom. Anoint your Church with the same Holy Spirit, that we who share in his suffering and victory may bear witness to the gospel of salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.      **Amen**

*Sit for:*

# **Readings from Scripture**

## **First Reading – Isaiah 40:1-8**

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?'  
All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.  
The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever.

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

## **Second Reading – John 8 : 12-15 (Jesus the Light of the World)**

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' Then the Pharisees said to him, 'You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid.' Jesus answered, 'Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I judge no one.'

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

## **Hymn**

(Greensleeves arr. John Stainer)

What child is this, who laid to rest  
on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds worship and angels sing:  
haste, haste to bring him praise,  
the babe, the son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate,  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Come, have no fear, God's Son is here,  
His love all loves exceeding:  
nails, spear shall pierce him through,  
the cross be borne for me, for you:  
hail, hail, the Saviour comes,  
the babe, the son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh,  
all tongues and people own him,  
the King of kings salvation brings,  
let every heart enthrone him:  
raise, raise your song on high  
while Mary sings a lullaby,  
joy, joy, for Christ is born,  
the babe, the son of Mary.

## Reflection

## Litany

Lord Jesus, hear our prayers, laden with the sufferings of all humankind, laden with the suffering of whole societies. Help us with the power of the Holy Spirit to conquer all sin in all of its manifestations: individual sin and the 'sin of the world'. Let there be revealed to the world the infinite power of merciful and healing love. May it transform consciences and hearts, bringing them wholeness. In your mercy reveal for all the light of hope. Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Our Father in Heaven

**Remind us constantly that you are parent to all your children, whoever of wherever they are or come from**

Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come,

**Establishing peace and justice, and hope and life for all peoples**

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.

**Disturb us into awareness of the needs of others**

Forgive us our sins

**Our pride and our prejudices**

As we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation,

**Especially keep our hearts and minds open to see the good in others.**

Deliver us from evil, for the kingdom

**Just and true**

The power

**Gentle and fair**

And the glory

**Shot through with the colours of love**

Are yours for ever and ever

**Amen**

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence and peace those for whom we have been asked to pray privately and whose prayers have been placed on this table during this service:

Lord, you know the needs of each one of us, our strengths and our weaknesses, our hopes and disappointments. We commend to your loving care those for whom we have been asked to pray. Guard them as the apple of your eye, hide them under the shadow of your wings, show them your merciful love – in health or in sickness, in life or in death. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

God of love

**Hear our prayers, Amen.**

**We invite everyone to come forward to light a candle**

*After we have returned to our seats we sing:*

**Hymn**

(Jacques Berthier 1923-1994)

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.  
Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!

*(Repeat three more times)*

*We say together:*

**The Almighty God, who is a strong tower for all who put their trust in him, whom all things in heaven and earth and under the earth obey, be now and evermore our defence. May we believe and trust that the only name under heaven given for health and salvation is the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen**

# Thanksgiving

*Together:*

**For loving the world and knowing our names, thank you, God  
For your strength that fills us and your love that heals us, thank you, God  
For your presence here with us now and for your hand  
that leads us into tomorrow, thank you, God  
Come bless us, hold us, wrestle with us, warm us in your embrace,  
for we are your people and you are our justice and joy. Amen**

## Hymn

(Bernadette Farrell b.1957)

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light!  
Shine in our hearts, shine through the darkness.  
Christ be our light!  
Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others,  
walls made of living stone.

Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

# The Blessing

May the blessing of God surround us  
May angels and friends share our journey  
May we be wise and strong and creative  
May we celebrate life and hope  
May God's image grow within us, gently, powerfully, tenderly  
May we be cradled in warmth and healing  
May we be held in God's wisdom and love  
May the gospel of life sustain us all the days of our journey home.

Let us go in the light and peace of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Our next healing service is on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
at 5pm in St Andrews Centre*

