

Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service.

Sunday December 28th 2025.

Handle your dreams with prayer.

Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.



Call to Worship. Psalm 148:1-4

Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights above.

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars.

Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for at his command they were created, and he established them for ever and ever—he issued a decree that will never pass away.

STF 210

Love came down at Christmas,

Love all lovely, Love divine;

Love was born at Christmas,

star and angels gave the sign.

worship we our Jesus:

but wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,

love be yours and love be mine,

love to God and all the world,

love for plea and gift and sign.

Worship we the Godhead,

Love incarnate, Love divine;

Prayers of adoration and confession

Emmanuel, God is with us! **The Lord is King! Let earth rejoice!**

The God-given gift of Jesus, the gift of love, joy, peace and hope in a fragile babe, laid with care in a manger of hay, Nurtured and protected by Mary and Joseph.

Emmanuel, God is with us! **The Lord is King! Let earth rejoice!**

We do not walk the world alone, we tread in the footsteps of others.

Others do not walk the world alone, they tread in our footsteps.

Together and not alone we are God's people walking with God.

Emmanuel, God is with us! **The Lord is King! Let earth rejoice!**

The world is not always an easy place in which to live,

O God, it is rough and it is tough and it is hard.

Let us handle with care and protection, love, joy, peace and hope all who we meet.

Emmanuel, God is with us! **The Lord is King! Let earth rejoice!**

In a humble stable, ignored by all within Bethlehem's walls, the divine touched this earth, breathed the air we breathe and walked the ground we walk. Born to sacrifice. Born to bring us life.

Forgive our reluctance to proclaim this to the world, forgive our ingratitude when we disregard your word.

Bring us to that place where shepherds heard the angels sing, and help us to share that glorious song. **Amen**

Bible reading. Matthew 2:13-23

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Reflection

Three days after Christmas and do you feel you still need handling with care after all the hectic activities of the season? Don't worry it's only a few more days until the next big hectic event and all that the New Year's celebration time can mean! Ok I will stop with the Grinch like messages. I hope you did have a great

Christmas and that your looking forward to what the new year brings. Some people reading this will have been with family and or friends, others will have had a much quieter time. However we know that this season can cause a lot of stress and strain for those who busily prepare to celebrate and for those who just have memories and the impact of the media etc reminding them that they are not celebrating with loved ones. This is not how Christmas or the turn of the year is meant to be. And yet when we peel away the tinsel and the trappings of the traditional things we have overlaid on this Holy festival. We see a displaced homeless family in desperate circumstances. Their first born child born in an out building. An occupying force insisting that they travel to register for a census. That these occupying rulers would no doubt use to bring further instability and restrictions upon them. A truly imperfect world. Yet in the midst of this chaos God comes down and offers salvation and peace. The joy of the angels, the delight of the shepherds and the hope of the wise men brings a warmth to this meagre stable setting that outshines the brightest star.

I'm sure that there will have been moments of joy amidst the chaos of Christmas and there will be moments of sheer hope and joy as we think about what the next year brings. Remember one of the most poignant moments in the nativity story. All the visitors had been and gone and 'Mary treasured all these things in her heart'. What can you take away from these past few days to treasure in your heart?

In our bible passage, the birth has happened. Shepherds and wisemen have been and gone. The angels proclaiming good news are replaced with an angel who brings Joseph a very disturbing message in a dream. Some dreams can be very disturbing and worrying. They can seem so real. People have written many books and developed many theories about the meaning of dreams. Quite a number seem to say that it's our subconscious bringing to the forefront all the things that we need to deal with. I in my simple opinion think it's that when we are resting and away from the hub and noise of daily life, our mind is much more responsive to sort through the things that are happening around us. One author wrote 'Dreams are vital for mental and emotional health, helping the brain process emotions, consolidate memories, boost creativity, and solve problems by allowing the mind to work through experiences in abstract ways, reducing stress and preparing us for future challenges. They serve as "mental housekeeping," clearing out unnecessary data and strengthening important learning, making them crucial for cognitive function and well-being.'

Certainly as Joseph fell into a deep sleep, he had let go of all the problems he had been so busy with in the daytime. In the first dream Joseph is told to take the child to a place of safety. So what preceded his dream. In the previous verses to our passage, the wisemen had been and brought their gifts. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. Disturbing gifts to bring to a newborn and without digressing they were symbolic of what this child would mean for the whole world. What he would represent and face as he grew up.

The wisemen might even have shared with Joseph the dream that they had had, warning them not to return to Herod, but to find another way to return home. Did Joseph hear something that might have warned him about what Herod was planning and the forthcoming murder of the innocent children? We don't know, we just know that when his mind was quiet he was open to hear an Angel of the Lord speaking and giving him clear direction.

Sleep, undisturbed sleep is a real gift. Have you ever thought about how a dream can be a gift? Perhaps you have said to someone, "Oh! I had such a lovely dream." Maybe you have had a dream that made you think of a different way to solve a problem you have been mulling over? Dreams can be a gift. They are important in the nighttime and just as important to hold onto in life. So many writers and artists of all kinds have been inspired by dreams. I have running through my mind as I write this that lovely song from the Musical "South Pacific", an excerpt from the song 'happy talk', that says, "You got to have a dream, If you don't have a dream, How you gonna have a dream come true?"

Dreams are necessary and precious. Another author says, "Without dreams, life would lose its sparkle, its zest. We would be trapped in a monotonous existence, going through the motions without a sense of purpose. Dreams give us something to strive for, something to look forward to. They are the whispers of our hearts, urging us to chase after what truly makes us happy". However we need to handle our dreams with care.

What would Joseph's dream for his newborn have been? For the child not to experience the hardships he has experienced? Isn't that the dream of all parents? And yet whilst asleep, in a dream, he is warned by the Angel of the Lord to flee for the child's protection.

There's a further dream, for Joseph now living as instructed, in Egypt. Jesus would have been nearly two years old. Herod had ordered the murder of all male children under the age of two to be killed. In this later dream Joseph is told that it's safe now to take the child to Israel as those who are seeking his life are dead. What a comforting dream to know that the child is now safe. And yet dreams need careful handling. They need grounding in reality.

Where was Joseph to go? He had kept the Christ child safe for nearly two years. Where would his dream for his child and family to settle be now? Would it be a safe haven?

We have dreams but sometimes they get confused with our desires. Flippantly, "I dream of a heaven where chocolate will be calorie and fat free!" That's one of my silly sayings and not serious at all. However we all have what we think are dreams of a better life, but are they grounded in reality? Are they dreams for the better or desires that are not the best ideas for the greater good? Dreams need handling with care and indeed prayer. To discern what is the best way forward. I can imagine Joseph wanting to take his family back to his home land, who wouldn't. Bethlehem was Joseph's home town and Mary had family there too. The city of

David probably felt like it was the right choice to bring up God's only son. However another dream helps him see the best way forward.

Before Herod died under his will, he split his kingdom into three separate parts for his three sons to rule over. They each would precede their names with the title 'Herod'. So Herod Archelaus received Judea and the surrounding lands, Herod Antipas, under the title of Tetrarch, received Galilee and other lands and Herod Philip received the third portion to govern.

It was in this last dream in our bible passage we see the Angel of the Lord intervene again and warning Joseph not to go into Judea where Archelaus reigned and was as cruel as his father. How cruel? It's recorded that at one of the passovers he caused three thousand of the people to be put to death in the temple and city. Fortunately Joseph paid heed to the warnings in his dreams and Jesus the Nazarene grew up in Nazareth. As the prophecies foretold.

When we consider how Joseph and the Holy Families lives were guided and protected by dreams. What is our dream for the new year as 2026 dawns? Are we open to being inspired by our dreams? Will we be careful with our dreams and ground them in the reality of prayer? I hope you have good dreams for the year ahead and you will handle those dreams with care. May the joy of the Angels and the Peace of Christ be the gifts that guide and keep you and inspire your dreams in the year ahead.

STF 350

I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon us, now or then,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the
wanderers,
to bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary
when Bethlem's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three-and-thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted,
and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
and lifts the burden from the heavy-laden,
for yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour,
when he the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is
known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when at his bidding every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when every human heart with love is filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
and myriad, myriad human voices sing,
and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, will
answer:
'at last the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is King!'

Prayers of Intercession

On this Sunday following Christmas Day let us pray for our community and our world.

Almighty God, who's son was born in the midst of political turmoil, save us from the vanity and ambition of humanity.

As we celebrate the birth of our humble king grant us leaders who follow that call to servanthood.

And who pursue unity and peace.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

At Christmas the angels sang, 'Peace to God's people on earth.' Yet our streets are often places of fear, especially for the young. We pray for those who work to keep our community safe. May we shine in the darkness an everlasting light.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Just as Mary and Joseph fled as refugees, carrying their infant son. So we pray for all those who are refugees in our world. May we be a nation moved by compassion and humanity. In our plenty may we give generously of what we have. And may we work together to seek a fairer world

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Creator God, you have made us stewards of this good earth. Save us from greed, selfishness and the pursuit of short term profit. That we might treasure this creation for the sake of all people. And heaven and nature may sing of the coming Kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

That first Christmas there was no room in the Inn. We pray for all those who are homeless and vulnerable. May we be determined to address the immediate needs. And also invest rightly in the public services of our nation.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

In the darkness of midwinter we pray for all those for whom this time of year is a struggle. Be near us we pray, and may we see the bright morning star that leads to the dawn of hope.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

The wise men left their palaces and comforts to seek your perfect light, in a world of prejudice and division
So may we have courage and faith to seek you and pursue the way of love and truth.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

And together we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us, **the Lord's Prayer**.

STF216

See him lying on a bed of straw;
draughty stable with an open door,
Mary cradling the babe she bore;
the Prince of Glory is his name:

*O now carry me to Bethlehem
to see the Lord of love again;
just as poor as was the stable then,
the Prince of Glory when he came.*

Star of silver, sweep across the skies,
show where Jesus in the manger lies;
shepherds, swiftly from your stupor rise
to see the Saviour of the world:

Angels, sing again the song you sang,
sing the story of God's gracious plan;
sing that Bethl'em's little baby can
be the Saviour of us all:

Mine are riches from your poverty,
from your innocence, eternity;
mine, forgiveness by your death for me;
child of sorrow for my joy:

The Blessing

Heavenly Father, Thank You for making all things new! As another new year dawns, help us to live each day for You. May we continually have a new song in our hearts to sing to You, no matter what comes our way. Help us to trust in You because we know that Your mercies are new every morning, and nothing ahead of us will take You by surprise. And "May the Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious to us; the Lord lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace".

Amen.

This written Service was prepared on Saturday December 6th 2025

'CCL Licence Number 178041'

