**Worship Sheet for Sunday 20th December 2020, the Fourth Sunday in Advent**

**Compiled by Mr John Green of Berkley Street Methodist Church, S Neots**

 **Wakey Wakey**

**A gathering prayer:**

Turning towards each other in this holy season of Advent, we light the final candle, trusting that you will always bring your covenant of love to completion. God, among us, in hope and expectation in fulfilment and flourishing.

**Hymn: STF 178 Long Ago Prophets knew https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S63rjDtYRYg**

**Prayers:** **Thanksgiving:**

Heavenly Father, **thank you for your reassuring presence and guidance during dark and difficult times over recent months with the COVID-19 19 virus; when the present seemed uncertain** you have been there. Thank you too, for the support of others when we felt disheartened, lacking in courage even times of doubt and where the future appeared unclear. May all we have experienced encourage us to renew our trust in you and your continuing purpose for each one of us. Help us to come this Christmas with renewed vision and purpose, expectant hearts, and minds as we ponder anew your great gift to us, your son Jesus. **Amen**

**Prayer of Confession:**

Today, days before we celebrate your self-giving in life, in conversation, in generosity and in courage, we turn to you knowing how often we fall short in life, in conversation, in generosity and in courage.
Forgive us, and make us more like you, not because it will make you love us more, but because it is for our sake, and for the sake of the people you love so much, that you came among us. **Amen. *(These 3 prayers including leaving prayer are taken from Roots)***

**Readings: 2 Samuel 7.1-11,16; Luke 1.26-38**

Wakey, Wakey, how many of you dare to admit to remembering where that was first said – well, the answer is …….in the 1930/40’s Sunday, radio 2, Billy Cotton’s Band show, which included Doreen Stephens, Alan Breeze and occasionally Mrs Mills and Russ Conway.

Its origins are however, associated in the 1800’s with the military, “Rise and shine, act lively and do well”.

It also follows along similar lines from Isaiah Chpt 60 vs 1 “Arise shine; for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you”. Or, from the Messenger - “Get out of bed. Jerusalem! Wake up. Put your face in the sunlight. God’s bright glory has risen for you. The whole is earth is wrapped in darkness all people sunk in darkness”.

Whose favourite sayings were “Hello playmates” ……. Before your very eyes” accompanied with the “Busy bee song” ……. the answer is…. Arthur Askey. Sorry no prizes if you got the answers right!

Throughout the Old Testament transitions are evident in which we see a reflection of the life of the communities from which our scriptures sprang. From Genesis and Abraham, we see a desert-dwelling God, worshipped by nomadic people which shaped their understanding of God as essentially portable. Even as Israel settles and Jerusalem becomes the royal and cultic city, there is a time lag between the embracing of a more sedentary existence and its reflection in religious practices.

Over a long period of time, we see many shifts, from judges to kings, patriarchs to prophets which created social and political change that was to have theological consequences. We see too, God encouraging the Israelites to become settled and to change their structure to reflect this. All of which confirmed his unwavering commitment to his chosen people. His call to be his people had not changed, but the way that relationship would be managed is about to change from a committed nomadic people, to that of a settled nation, whose God needs to be amid them and to be the foundation of their common life and pointing towards God's coming among us in Christ.

For this to happen David would need to revise his earlier thinking. For Nathan, the prophet hears that God has never wanted his presence to be housed in anything more than a tent or tabernacle. So, David was not the person to build the house for God, but God will build David's house. A house that will point the way towards the coming of Christ the Davidic house and kingdom that will be 'made sure forever'.

Perhaps mistakenly, we sometimes we imagine that real saints are never troubled. Often turmoil and peace may co-exist alongside each other – and although the turmoil is real, God’s peace is stronger and will sustain us.

Reading this message perhaps you may feel in the current lockdown that you are at the opposite end of the spectrum. Although, a roof over your end, days are long and no one to share your day with, if so, God is there ready for you to share your thoughts and concerns with him and to show the way forward, then, either speak to your class leader or trusted friend letting them know how you feel.

There is the possibility that we can so easily become over familiar with the Advent stories and where we struggle to find new ways of bringing the “Good News” to God’s’ people.

But there-in lies the challenge, to make our message more engaging, by getting behind the story and the individual involved in the narrative, through empathy, the emotions that have driven and motivated individuals. It also provides the opportunity for us to acknowledge our own thoughts and feelings and thereby give us greater insights about ourselves and others. To think outside our boxes. Below are some questions for reflection: **Q:** Following the reading of Samuel parallel lines are drawn between: - the “Davidic line and “Jesus Coming”. - the emphasis on the “House”. Here we can see and identify with the contrast between David’s opulent living and Jesus birth in a stable. How does this fit with ours and other’s living standards? Thinking of the house suggests the fire in Eynesbury and the loss of life and where life will never be the same. **Q:** What moments in our lives have turned out to be crucial, sending us off in a new direction? **Q:** From the story of David when he was not the person to build the house of God. How do we feel when someone has assumed our position? **Q:** Stretching through many centuries there were many social and political changes for Israel. With the possibility of a no Brexit deal - What changes will there be on the horizon for us? **Q:** What challenges/opportunities has COVID-19 created for us and how might we address/undertake them? **Q:** If an angel were to knock at your door, what do you imagine they would say? Gabriel bursts into Mary’s world, and her life is changed for ever. She is faced with a crucial decision: does she trust these words or not? Is she willing to have her life turned upside down? Can she cope with the weight of expectation now placed on her and her son? The commitment she makes must last, and therefore it is vital it be made wholeheartedly. At the end Mary accedes to God's plan and becomes a model of what Paul will call 'the obedience of faith'. However familiar we may be with the Christmas narrative, there is still the excitement of rediscovering that ‘nothing is impossible with God’. Picking up on the words of Arthur Askey “Before your very eyes” “Wakey wakey” And the words of Isaiah the prophet says, “Rise and shine, act lively and do well”. We make a mistake if we think we can domesticate God. God insists on popping up when we do not expect it. Amen

**Hymn StF 177 Low he comes with clouds descending https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIszhvHjBxQ**

**Intercessory Prayers:**

Living God, we thank you for the great message of the Gospel, the glad tidings of your love, the good news of your coming to our world through your Son Jesus Christ. May that message inspire us this Christmastime and, in the days, to come.

**Speak your word of love, and move in the hearts of all who hear it.** We thank you too, that the Good News of Christ has challenged people across the ages, and though it has been proclaimed countless times and we have heard it ourselves so many times before, it continues to be good news for all as it continues to speak and change lives across the worldwide. **Lord, speak your word of love, and move in the hearts of any who hear it.** We pray for those you have specially called to proclaim the Good News - ministers, preachers, evangelists, teachers all those with the special gift and responsibility of communicating your word. Grant to all, your continued wisdom, dedication, inspiration, and courage, that they may faithfully witness to you in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Speak your word of love and move in the hearts of all who hear it.** We pray also for those who hear the Good News, responding in different ways; those who have closed their minds to what you would say to them. May your love break through the barriers they erect;  those who have heard but failed to understand**,** may their hearts be opened to the truth; those who have yet to grasp that the Gospel is good news for them — may the experience of meeting Christ transform their lives. We pray also for those who have responded and come to faith — may their knowledge of you continue to grow. **Speak your word of love and move in the hearts of all who hear it.** Finally, we pray for those who long for good news, who cry out for glad tidings the poor, starving, sick and lonely, the oppressed, persecuted, unloved, bereaved so many people across the world who despair of ever seeing hope rekindled. May the message of the Gospel mean good news for them. **Speak your word of love and move in the hearts of all who hear it.** Living God, come again to your world this Christmas time, through your word, your Spirit, your people, and the living presence of Christ, and so may the message of the Gospel truly be good news for all people. **Speak your word of love and move in the hearts of all who hear it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen Lord’s Prayer: Hymn: SF186 Tell out my Soul https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ji4y9Q-K0**

**Leaving Prayer:** Loving God, we thank you for those moments in our lives that have been milestones in our journey of faith — moments when we have been especially conscious of your presence, when faith has grown, when truth has dawned on us in an unmistakable way. We thank you for such times, but we pray you will help us always to recognise that our journey is not ended but only just begun. Teach us that however many answers we may have, there is always more to see, more to learn and more to understand. **Amen.**