**Sunday Evening before Christmas Day**

**The Seventh in Our Advent Exploration dw**

**At Matawhero Historic Church**

**24th December, 2023 RE-BUILD**

**\*\*\* Welcome and Greeting** : We are led by : Jan Ewart [Elder ]

 Our Reader is : Barabara Larsen.

**\*\*\* INTROIT**

[**https://youtu.be/urQEvMylD8g**](https://youtu.be/urQEvMylD8g)

*Played by Prof Ian Tracey, on the Copeman Hart Organ*

 *At Mayflower Methodist Church,* ***Leicester, UK****.*

**Words & Music from *“ Leibster Jesu, wird sin Hier* ” BWV 731**

 **by J.S.Bach (1685 – 1750)**

**Liebster Jesus, wir sind hier, Dearest Jesus, we are here,**

 **um auf dich und dein Wort zu hören; to listen to You and Your word**

**Direkte Sinne und Verlangen Direct (our} senses and desires**

 **zu den süßen Lehren des Himmels, to the sweet teachings of Heaven,**

**dass die Herzen der Erde that the hearts of the earth ( peoples )**

 **um den ganzen Weg zu dir gezogen zu werden  ~~[to~~] be drawn all the way to You.**

**\*\*\*Our Call to Worship; Psalm 122: [adapted ©cbyates 2023] Good News trans..]**

 **In Praise of the New Jerusalem.**

*L : I was glad when they said to me,*

 *“Let us go to the LORD's house.”*

**All : We have all come here tonight, and now,**

 **we stand within the gates of Jerusalem!**

 **Jerusalem will be a city rebuilt and restored**

 **to its former beauty, order, and harmony**.

 *L : Here the people of the new Israel will meet.*

**All : They will give thanks to their  LORD**

 **according to all His commandents.**

 **Here, the true King of the New Israel**

 **will judge judge all His people justly and fairly**.

*L : Pray for the peace of the New Jerusalem:*

 *“… May those who love you prosper. …”*

**All : “… May there be peace inside your walls**

 **and safety in all of Your places of assembly. …”**

 **For the sake of my family and friends, and all who live within,**

 **I say to Jerusalem, “… Peace be with you! …”**

 **For the sake of the house of the LORD our God**

 **We will pray for your continued prosperity. AMEN**

**\*\*\*1-PRAISE : CH-4 304 SA 35 [ O little Town]**

**O little town of Bethlehem**

 **how still we see thee llie!**

 **Above thy deep and dreamless sleep**

 **the silent stars go by.**

**Yet in the 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 all’ on earth.**

**For Christ is born of Mary,**

 **and gathered all above.**

 **While mortals sleep, the Angels keep**

 **their watch of wond’ring love.**

**How silently, how silently,**

 **the wondrous gift is given.**

 **So God imparts to human hearts**

 **the Blessings of His heav’n.**

 **No ear may hear His coming,**

 **but in this world of sin,**

 **where meek souls will receive Him, still**

 **the dear child 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 wit us;**

 **Our Lord, Immanuel.**

**\*\*\*Our Prayer of Approach, Seeking Assurance.***,*

*L : Let us pray … together … God , our Loving Creator;*

*God of Abraham and Sarah, of Mary and Joseph.*

 *Now You call us who are here, on a journey of faith.*

**All : We are in Your presence; waiting quietly: waiting patiently;**

 **waiting to hear yet again that old, familiar story,**

**the one which tells of what You have done for humankind.**

 **We quietly wait to hear Your voice and to heed Your Word**

 **and to follow in the footprints of others, so long ago.**

*L : Awaken us, this night, like the Shepherds so long ago*

 *that we may all – together -- participate again*

 *listening and speaking afresh the Beginning of the Good News … …*

**All : “Peace on Earth;**

**and Goodwill to all God’s children**

 **as it was; is now, and ever shall be.”.**

*L : Now we join together in words of prayer that our Lord Jesus taught us*

**All : Help us now to honour Your name.**

 **Come and set up Your Kingdom.**

 **Give us each day, the food we need.**

 **Now Forgive us our sins,**

 **as we forgive everyone else:**

 **all who have done wrong to us.**

 **Now keep us from being tempted otherwise. Amen.**

**\*\*\*2-PRAISE : CH4 312; SA5 Away in a Manger, no crib for a bed, ..**

 **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 you, Lord Jesus, look down from on high,**

 **and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay**

 **close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.**

 **Bless all the dear children in your tender care,**

 **and fit us for heaven, to live with you there**

**>>1-READING : Based on the Gospel of Luke, Ch 1: vs. 46ff**

 ***[ TOGETHER, We read the poetry of the 'Magnificat'.***

 ***These words to Jesus’s grateful Servant mother, Mary.***

 ***Let us think of ourselves as Servants of the living God,***

 ***reflecting upon all His Blessings and goodness***

 ***towards us as individuals, all of our lives.]***

*L : My soul magnifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,*

**All : for He has no concern for the lowly estate of His servants**.

*L : In the future, all generations will recognise all these Blessings,*

 *For He has done great things for us: therefore, His Name is Holy*.

**All : He is merciful to those who respect Him; generations have known this.**

 **He showers His blessings on us all in so many different ways;**

 **those who are proud, are proud only in their own imaginations:**

 **and those who seek raw power, will often be disappointed.**

 **Instead He uses us to Bless those who are lonely and needy.**

*L : He will fill those who seek Him with what is good for them;*

**All : Those who have, will be left wanting more, but always seeking.**

*L : He always remembers His promise to look kindly on His people,*

 *He has given succour and help to His ‘renewed’ Israel in the past.*

**All : He gave these promises to our own forefathers and ancestors;**

 **from Abraham’s people, to Jesus’s followers, forever and ever.**

 **All glory be to God that His Word has been forever true; Amen.**

**>>2READING : The PROPHET MICAH : Ch 5 : vs. 2- 5**

*Wait for it … it will happen …*

**>>3-PRAISE : Ch.4 313 SA40 See in yonder manger low …**

**See! in yonder manger low,**

**born for us on earth below,**

**see! the tender Lamb appears**

**promised from eternal years.**

*Refrain*

 ***Hail, thou ever-blessed morn!***

 ***Hail, redemption’s happy dawn!***

 ***Sing through all Jerusalem,***

 ***‘Christ is born in Bethlehem!’***

**Lo! within a manger lies**

**he who built the starry skies,**

**he who, throned in height sublime,**

**sits amid the cherubim.**

 *Refrain*

**Say, ye holy shepherds, say,**

**what your joyful news today;**

**wherefore have ye left your sheep**

**on the lonely mountain steep?**

 *Refrain*

**‘As we watched at dead of night,**

**lo! we saw a wondrous light:**

**angels, singing peace on earth,**

**told us of the Saviour’s birth.’**

 *Refrain*

**>>3-READING : The Gospel According to LUKE, Ch 2, v. 3ff.**

**Our REFLECTION on the THEME of TODAY’S SCRIPTURE**

 **led by Emeritus Minister, Revd Dr Clive Yates**

**TONIGHT’s TOPIC : “GOD ‘BREAKS-IN’ (always ) UNEXPECTEDLY!”**

**\*\*\*4-PRAISE : CH-4 301 SA21 Hark the herald Angels sing**

**Hark the herald angels sing**

 **glory to the new-born king**

 **peace on earth, and mercy mild,**

 **God and sinners reconciled.**

**Joyful, all you nations, rise,**

 **join the triumph of the skies;**

 **with the angelic host proclaim,**

 **'Christ is born in Bethlehem'. *(Refrain...)***

 ***Hark the herald angels sing***

 ***glory to the new-born king***

**Christ, by highest heaven adored,**

 **Christ, the everlasting Lord,**

 **late in time behold him come,**

 **offspring of a virgin's womb!**

**Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;**

 **hail the incarnate Deity!**

 **Pleased as Man with man to dwell,**

 **Jesus, our IMMANUEL*. (Refrain...)***

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!**

 **Hail the Sun of Righteousness!**

 **Light and life to all he brings,**

 **risen with healing in his wings**.**Mild he lays his glory by,**

 **born that man no more may die,**

 **born to raise the sons of earth,**

 **born to give them second birth.**

 ***(Refrain.)***

**\*\*\* OUR PRAYER of SELF- DEDICATION :**

*L :*  ***Tonight, … instead*** *of our usual offertory dedication,*

 *we ask You to receive instead,* ***-- our-selves*** *--just as we are.*

 *We ask you humbly to look into our hearts this Christmas Eve.*

**All : Try us; search us: re-direct us; guide us:**

 **Help us to learn again to speak Your Words and Wisdom**

 **to the ears of others who truly search for meaning**

 **in the midst of our endless change and confusions.**

 **We ask You to receive all our thoughts and devotions**

 **in Jesus Name and with Your Blessing upon us: AMEN**

**\*\*\*5-PRAISE : Ch.4 306 SA32 [Adeste Fideles ] O come all ye Faithful …**

**O come, all ye faithful**

 **joyful and triumphant.**

 **O come ye! O come ye**

 **to Beth-lehem.**

 **Come and behold Him,**

 **born the King of Angels. *O come let us adore Him ( 3x)***

 ***Christ the Lord*.**

 **Sing choirs of Angels,**

 **sing in exultation.**

 **Sing all ye citizens**

 **of heaven above.**

 **"Glory to God,**

 **Glory in the highest' (Refrain)**

 **Yea, Lord we greet Thee,**

 **born one happy morning**

 **Jesus, to Thee be**

 **glo-ry given.**

 **Word of the Father**

 **now in flesh appearin g. (Refrain)**

**++ A CHARGE to EVERYONE HERE this SPECIAL NIGHT :**

**++ Like the Shepherds went on their way rejoicing,**

 **let us go Rejoicing in our hearts and minds**

 **carrying the GOOD NEWS with us**

 **and**

 **GREETING ANYONE AND EVERYON**E **WE MEET BY SAYING,**

 **“… A BLESSED and HAPPY Christmas-time to you ! …”**