

**Morning Worship**  
**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December**  
**Festival of St John**

*Carol – On Christmas Night all Christians Sing*

On Christmas night, all Christians sing  
To hear the news the angels bring  
On Christmas night, all Christians sing  
To hear the news the angels bring  
News of great joy, news of great birth  
News of our merciful King's birth

Then why should men on Earth be so sad  
Since our redeemer made us glad  
Then why should men on Earth be sad  
Since our redeemer made us glad  
When from our sin He set us free  
All for to gain our liberty

When sin departs behold His grace  
Then life and health come in its place  
When sin departs behold His grace  
Then life and health come in its place  
Angels and men with joy may sing  
All for to see the newborn King

All out of darkness we have light  
Which made the angels sing this night  
All out of darkness we have light  
Which made the angels sing this night  
Glory to God and peace to man  
Now and forever more, amen

### Invitation to confession

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph:  
“You shall call his name Jesus,  
For he will save his people from their sins”.  
Therefore let us seek the forgiveness of God  
Through Jesus the Saviour of the World.

### Psalm 117

- 1 O praise the Lord, all you nations;  
praise him, all you peoples.
- 2 For great is his steadfast love towards us,  
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever.  
Alleluia.

### Collect

Merciful Lord,  
cast your bright beams of light upon the Church,  
that being enlightened by the teaching  
of your blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John,  
we may so walk in the light of your truth,  
that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ your incarnate Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### Readings

Exodus 33:7-11a

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each of them, at the entrance of their tents and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak

with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and bow down, all of them, at the entrance of their tents. Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the tent.

## 1 John 1

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

### Carol – Silent Night

Silent night, holy night.  
All is calm, all is bright,  
round yon virgin mother and child;  
holy infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night.  
Shepherds quake at the sight,  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heavenly hosts sing alleluia:  
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night, holy night.  
Son of God, love's pure light,  
radiant beams from thy holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace:  
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.

John 21:19b-25

Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Follow me.'

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?' When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' So the rumour spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'

This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

### Sermon – Wendy Carter

Today we celebrate a patronal festival for Apostle, evangelist, and letter writer St. John the Divine.

He is the patron saint of our little wooden church in Tilehouse Lane. Brother of James the Great James and John were Galilean fishermen and sons of Zebedee. Tradition says that John is the un-named 'beloved disciple' who leaned against Jesus at the last supper which we recalled in today's Gospel reading.

I wonder how you got your Christian name?

Was it handed down – a family name?

Or a reminder of someone who was admired?

When that happens there is always the hope that the child will have some of the qualities of the original bearer of the name.

Something similar happens with our churches, which are usually named after a biblical character like our Saints James and John; though sometimes they

named after local people venerated in early Christianity like Botolph or Alphege or Columba. Sometimes they note an aspect of Jesus - like Christ the King or Ascension.

like parents who hopefully name their baby after someone memorable, a congregation hopes to display some of their patronal saint's gifts in their own life and witness.

So what else do we know about our St. John?

Jesus nicknamed James and John 'sons of thunder' [Mark 10: 35-41] so we can assume they were dynamic, excitable. But they were also dependable and committed, present with Jesus at important times in his ministry - on the mountain for the transfiguration [Mark 9:2], when he raised Jairus' daughter [Lk 8:51-56], in Gethsemane before Jesus' arrest. [Mark 14:33]

John was at the foot of the cross and entrusted with the care of Jesus' mother Mary as Jesus died [John 19:26-27]

It was John who reached the tomb before Peter on the first Easter morning [John 20:3-8] and seeing the grave clothes lying empty believed Jesus was alive when the others were bewildered and confused.

Later, in the early days after the Resurrection, at dawn after an unsuccessful night of fishing, when they turn the boat for the shore, a stranger on the beach tells them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. They follow the advice and make a huge catch, - it is John who recognises the stranger is Jesus.

In the Acts of the Apostles we find John with Peter healing the lame man at The Temple [Acts 3] and being named as one of the 'pillars of the early church'. [Galatians 2: 9]

We can safely say John knew Jesus very well in the three years of his ministry around Galilee but after the Ascension John thought and prayed about all that had happened and his Gospel is full of insight into the mystery of who Jesus was and is and always will be.

St. John's symbol is an eagle, said to have been assigned to him 'because his gaze pierced further into the mystery of heaven than anyone else'.

It shows in the poetry of his words which we heard at Christmas in the prologue to his Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come

into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, <sup>[a]</sup> and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

He could appreciate that Jesus was the light and life of the world – our only solid hope. But humanity generally didn't, doesn't, recognise that as fact, just a few see it and stand by it.

A few verses later John writes

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, <sup>[d]</sup> full of grace and truth.

The words literally say that 'the word' pitched his tent among us, or 'tabernacled' with us.

Did that ring a bell,?

Make a connection for you?

It would have done to the Jewish hearers of the Gospel. That reading we heard from the Hebrew Scripture - Exodus 33:

<sup>7</sup> Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, he called it the 'tent of meeting'. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting,

I think John is saying the human Jesus pitched his tent and became the place where we go to meet God.

We can go to the tabernacled Lord God, he is with us in a new way – actually become one of us, one with us.

In his first letter [1 John 1] John elaborates on what that meant for him as a disciple travelling with, watching, listening, learning from, the Eternal word of God.

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup> this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it... <sup>3</sup> we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us;

One of John's great strengths is his ability to make his knowledge and experience of living with the 'Eternal Word', Jesus, with such power that it can speak to our souls too.

Make our hearts sing with the reality of God being incarnate, alongside of us.

When we receive the wine and wafer at Communion we too have 'seen with our eyes and touched with our hands.'

Sharing that happy knowledge with others can make 'our joy complete' too!

Do you remember our Parish mission statement?

Its 'Knowing Christ -making Him known.'

It couldn't be a better strap line for John the evangelist our patron saint. It's one we adopted to focus our minds as a Parish on our reason for being church.

Revd. Paul reminded us on the Sunday after his Licensing that we are apprentices of Jesus, each of us must attend to that relationship and continue to learn from and copy Him.so that get to 'know him' better.

That 'knowing Him' we can share that experience and bring hope and joy to others.

To lift us out of the difficulties of the pandemic, and all the other things we worry about in our world and remember that there is one ultimate reality – that God is the light and life of the world in Jesus Christ - and that He is with us.

Amen

### Introduction to the Peace

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,

And we have seen his glory.

The peace of the Lord be always with you

**And also with you**

### Blessing

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one

things earthly and heavenly,

fill you with peace and goodwill

and make you partakers of the divine nature;

and the blessing ...

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 all the 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 to us today  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell  
O come to us, abide with us  
Our Lord Emmanuel