

Welcome and Notices

Good morning and welcome to Tyndale on this Third Sunday in Advent. Whether you are joining us from home or here with us at Tyndale, we extend a very warm welcome, especially if you are a visitor and hope you feel at home with us.

This morning our service is being taken by our Community Minister Rachel Haig. Rachel, we thank you very much for leading our service today and look forward to spending this time together in worship.

This afternoon at 5.30pm, we have our Gift Service, which is being taken by David Bell. There is still time for you to pick up a label from the tree at the back, if you have not done so already, and return with the present at the service later on. Full details are at the back of the church by the tree if you need them.

On Tuesday we have our weekly Coffee Shop, which is held here in the sanctuary, from 10am until 12noon. Do come along and enjoy refreshments and conversation.

Please note Time@Tyndale is not happening this week, it is now closed until the New Year, when a new programme of events will be advertised.

On Thursday morning at 11 am we have our online coffee shop time. The details are on the church website for those of you who are free and able to join in this time of conversation.

Next Sunday, the 19th December, as well as our morning worship we have our Carols by Candlelight service which is at 6pm. This is always a very special service, so do pop the date in your diary if you have not already done so.

Lastly, Tina Parsons is hoping to print a new Directory for 2022. If your details have changed, please let Tina know, or if you are new to our congregation and would like your details included, please see Tina. I would stress as Bruce did last week, the directory is only for members of the congregation and is only given to those who are in it. Thank you.

Lighting of the Advent Candles – III

Light looked down and saw darkness.

All: 'I will go there,' said Light.

Peace looked down and saw war.

All: 'I will go there,' said Peace.

Love looked down and saw hatred.

All: 'I will go there,' said Love.

Lighting of the candles

Come to be our hope, Lord Jesus

(Brazilian)

Call to worship

So he,

The Lord of Light,

The Prince of Peace,

The King of Love,

came down and crept in beside us.

Come Lord Jesus, shine your light on us as we walk the road to Bethlehem once more, May we find room for you, where there was no room before. So let us worship you, Holy One.

Hymn BPW 143 Hark the glad sound

Opening Prayers

Great and merciful God, we seek to give you all glory and honour and blessing in our gathering here today because we know you are close to us by your Spirit and through Jesus Christ, your Son, we both welcome and wait for your presence. As we travel on the journey of Advent, we thank you for the promises of your word, and the grace we receive as your gift to us in Jesus. As we journey through Advent towards the celebration of your incarnation, teach us how to wait for you in our lives. To wait for your presence in all things. Be present to us in our worship. Be present to us in our homes. Be present to us in our work. Be present to us when we remember your life and death and resurrection. Show us the real meaning of life and love and how to live fully in your presence. Remove the distractions of our minds and hearts so that our worship can be fully devoted to you.

Thank you that your mercy and grace offered in Jesus Christ assures us that we are your children. Help us to be childlike in our response to your love for us. Help us to be mature in the choices we make to follow you. And help us to embrace the growing times of both light and darkness. Use this time to inspire us to continued praise each day and empower us to live wholeheartedly for you. For there is none like you and we turn to you with our hopes as well as our concerns, our desires and our despair. Thank you for your promise to never leave us or abandon us. Thank you for your faithfulness through all the generations. Thank you for calling to us by our

names and holding us in the palm of your hands. So inspire us today as we wait for you and seek your presence. In Jesus name, Amen

Song

Into the darkness of this world,
Into the shadows of the night,
Into this loveless place you came,
Lightened our burdens, eased our pain
And made these hearts your home.
Into the darkness once again
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Refrain:

*Come with your love to make us whole
Come with your light to lead us on,
Driving the darkness far from our souls:
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Into the longing of our souls,
Into these heavy hearts of stone,
Shine on us now your piercing light,

Order our lives and souls aright,
By grace and love unknown,
Until in you our hearts unite,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Refrain:

O holy child, Emmanuel
Hope of the ages, God with us,
Visit again this broken place
Till all the earth declares your praise
And your great mercies own.
Now let your love be born in us,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Refrain:

Come in your glory, take your place,
Jesus, the name above all names,
We long to see you face to face,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Maggi Dawn

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Song Before the world began

John Bell WGRG

Reading [Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11](#)

Reading [John 1: 1-5, 9-18](#)

Song

To be in your presence,
To sit at Your feet,
Where Your love surrounds me,
And makes me complete.
*This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.
This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.*

To rest in Your presence,
Not rushing away;
To cherish each moment,
Here I would stay.

Noel Richards © 1991 Kingsway's Thankyou Music.

Sermon Hope in Presence

When I was growing up, my Mum used to do embroidery. She was very good at it, and my younger sister Susan picked up that skill from my Mum. Me, not so much, only on very few occasions, on quiet days away usually, have I found myself with needle and thread, quietly, letting my mind wander, whilst I have stitched very untidily golden threads as a way of being present to God.

One particular embroidery of my Mum's hung in our dining room where we shared our meals each day. It said 'Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation.' Mostly there were the 5 of us, Dad and Mum and we three sisters which always left one chair free. We used to joke about being careful not to sit on Jesus by mistake. I suppose we got used to the idea that God was present when we shared our meals. It didn't stop us arguing and laughing or trying to get one another into trouble or rushing to get away from the table as quickly as possible and avoid doing the dishes if at all possible.

God was present, part of it all, an assumption, I suppose. The reading from John 1 begins with a statement that places the Jesus we are awaiting for through Advent as being present to God at the beginning of everything. Being present to our maker. As well as being present at the beginning of time, the Jesus we meet in the gospels also takes time to be present to God in the midst of the business of healing the sick, changing water into

wine, fishing, teaching, having tea at people's houses, upsetting people in the Temple, and walking the roads of Galilee. Often Jesus escaped and took himself away to pray, time to let go of all the earthly mess and reconnect with eternity. Maybe remember how it all began in the beginning.

So that the being present to life around him didn't overwhelm his spirit or exhaust his patience, or diminish his faithfulness to the task he was born to:

When the song of the angels is stilled

When the star in the sky is gone

When the kings and princes are home

When the shepherds are back with their flock

The work of Christmas begins.

To find the lost

To heal the broken

To feed the hungry

To release the prisoner

To rebuild the nations

To bring peace among others

To make music in the heart. *From Thurman, H (1973) The Mood of Christmas and other celebrations*

The real presence was not just in those times of stepping out of being busy, rather it was the deep faith, the assumption of God's presence in the midst of everything.

This echoes Isaiah's proclamation of Good News and Jesus' choice at his own 'coming out' in Nazareth to neighbours and friends at the beginning of his ministry.

To be present to life is both a joyful and painful thing. Life is quite a lot to get one's head around. We are connected to one another, but we are often so incredibly alone. We are born in particular places but our identity is shaped by our experiences and we often end up far from where we began, physically and emotionally. We are filled with joy at the inexplicable beauty of the earth, from the tiniest insect to the highest mountain range, and yet every day our actions destroy, use up, unmake the very air we need to breathe, for life to continue, for the earth to survive. The assumption that life will continue ad infinitum and we can endlessly consume to our hearts content does not make for any contentment or peace. Human beings are contrary creatures. We watch films about great evil and imagine Superheroes that will sort it out, until the next battle to save planet earth. At the same time as evil creates real life hates and have-nots, wars that are uprooting lives and making them flee across continents to drown in boats off the shore of cold, unwelcoming lands that will never truly accept them. Without hope of any Superhero.

And yet, our story is about the word made flesh in a world that's broken up and at war, divided between haves and have-nots, powerful and powerless, those who find the functions of life preferable to the relationships that connect us all. People who love money and wealth and designer status and seem often very miserable with it. In that world, we had a moment when a light shone in darkness and hope was spoken, out loud.

God was present in the darkness and still is. That's our flickering, candlelight hope that is echoed in Jesus' words and the words of the Prophet of ancient times.

And here's what the prophet had to say about the Spirit of God's priority? And what was the word that Jesus' life spoke into reality? It was the message that told of the creator God who loves what was brought to life and seeks to be known. To be present in our lives. It was all about our lives. Human life. About pain and joy, and belonging, about poverty both physical and spiritual, about the things that make our lives special and complete, and the things which destroy and maim us, body and soul. Things which imprison people from which they can be set free.

It was that the meaning of our lives is to be found in the things which are not what we want, but what we truly need to exist. God present in darkness bringing new things to birth, preparing the way, waiting for us to be ready for new life to be born, for new relationships, for new understandings, new discoveries that bring health and wellbeing. An embroidery, if you like, a tapestry of threads that are an utter mess, but when shown the right way up becomes a beautiful, harmonious vision of what God intended life to be. Something good. Good News.

These days I hear people talk about the God of your understanding or none. God's Unknown Presence – In many ways, for all the preaching and lovely buildings and books written, God remains shielded, hidden, unseen, unrecognised, fought over, pulled apart. This was not God's intention. This was not God's way. The assumption has faded and gone. And whilst God remains unseen, hope is all we have. He came to his people and they didn't recognise him. Still he comes to us and people don't recognise the empty chair at the table. Perhaps today we need a different introduction than the ones that we've relied on. Words are not enough.

'A voice crying in the wilderness,' a good way to describe much of human life as seen in our newspapers and magazines. A wilderness, stripped of the things that last to be replaced by things that fade and wither because the things we stretch for and seek are like baubles that beckon us with their twinkle but fade and crack, to be replaced by bigger, better, shinier ones.

But the Spirit of God always leads us to the one who, in the wilderness of our lives, speaks of the eternal, the love that will not let us go, the God who still seeks us, the everlasting arms that will hold us. Here is the voice that widens our horizons and enables us to be different, who speaks in parables and walks the dusty streets, and is accessible to those he meets. Here is the one whose resurrected life breathes the Spirit into us and so deals with our bitterness and jealousy and self-hatred and unfaithfulness, it confronts our greed, and anger and hatred. It unmask's shallowness and apathy and instead makes us long for greater understanding and connectedness.

Who hears the cry for presence? For love? The word became flesh and shared our sorrows and violence. God is actually here. Willing to connect us together again as part of a much bigger reality of life. Where the assumption of God is in every moment.

It's not empty sacrifices or countless worship songs that God requires. God doesn't require us to say how good he/she/they are. God requires us to walk the road with Jesus, to be present to Jesus and to be present to others beyond ourselves – to be Good News. To bring hope. To be full of grace and truth like Jesus was. To make God known. And it begins by being present to our neighbour. Beside you today, sitting next to you in the coffee shop, standing behind you in the queue at the supermarket, next door at home, on the zoom call for work: that's where it begins. It's about the

willingness to be open to others, to be vulnerable. It's when you ask if someone is okay it's expecting them to tell you the truth about how they are? And being willing to stay in that moment with them. That's where Grace and truth will do their work of making Jesus present.

Song BPW 5 Be still for the presence

Prayers for the world

O God our maker, we your people turn to you and call for help.

Hear us in heaven as we cry out to you for those places where relations between nations are escalating towards violence and increasing hostility. We pray for Russia and Ukraine, for NATO, for China and the US. At a time when nations have sought to work together for the good of the earth, Lord, help it not to be undone with acts of aggression and division.

Come Lord Jesus, graciously hear us **ALL: and help us to carry your light and presence**

Hear us in Heaven as we cry out for the people known as migrants and refugees. For those desperate to find a safe home, and a place where families can thrive, find welcome. For young people and children lost and left alone to fend for themselves.

Come Lord Jesus, graciously hear us **and help us to carry your light and presence**

Hear us in Heaven as we cry out to you for little Arthur and all those children suffering from cruelty and neglect. We pray for those who work in child protection services, the police, social services, family courts. And we pray for families who are struggling financially, medically, under pressure because of work or lack of support. If it takes a village to raise a child, help us to find ways to play our part in being present where there is need.

Come Lord Jesus, graciously hear us **and help us to carry your light and presence**

Hear us in Heaven as we cry out for all those working in our schools, from teachers, classroom assistants, parent helpers, cleaners, admin staff and Head Teachers, being vigilant of their children and their families, tired at the end of term but trying to put on nativities and make costumes, and do parties, and have fun. Give them the resources they need to fulfil their tasks, now as they complete this term and enough rest to ready them for the New Year.

Come Lord Jesus, graciously hear us **and help us to carry your light and presence**

Hear us in Heaven as we cry out for those working so tirelessly in our NHS hospitals, GP practices, community social care, Ambulance services, under extreme pressures.

Come Lord Jesus, graciously hear us **and help us to carry your light and presence**

Hear us in heaven as we cry out for those in our communities who are lonely, who are suffering with their mental health and wellbeing, who feel the constant craving of addiction, who have felt the sting of redundancy and unemployment, who have no place to call home.

Come Lord Jesus, graciously hear us **and help us to carry your light and presence**

O God our maker, we your people, hear your cry for all your children and those we are called to serve and share life with. Bring your comfort and blessing to our loved ones, and those we haven't seen for a while. Give us your strength, and courage to face the challenges of these days. Give us wisdom and compassion that who we are will display your likeness and give witness to your presence and your love.

Come Lord Jesus, graciously hear us **and help us to carry your light and presence**

Amen

Words of Offering

We pause in this moment to recognise the gifts we each bring to our common life, for our money, time and talents offered for the building of God's Kingdom through Tyndale and beyond.

So we share the grace with each other:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

Hymn BPW 149 There's a light upon the mountain

Blessing

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always. Amen