

## **Christmas Crib Service 2020**

### **Collect:**

Eternal God who made this most holy night  
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:  
bring us, who have known the revelation of that light on earth, to see the radiance  
of your heavenly glory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord who is alive and reigns with you in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Gospel: John 1.1-5, 14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him and without  
Him was not anything made that was made.  
In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it.  
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth; we have beheld  
his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father.

### **A Reflection:**

How in this time of Covid might we respond to the message of Christmas?

The Shepherds: the first people written about by Luke as visitors to the manger  
where they do find the baby wrapped in swaddling cloth and lying in the manger.  
What made the shepherds receptive to receive the sign? Who do they represent?

Shepherds would have known all about social isolation, living day by day to make a  
living as best they could and in this way heroically helping to serve the greater good.  
They lived away from dense areas of population, spending most of the days and  
nights outside very aware of changing seasons, of light, dark and sparkling stars and  
no doubt considering their place under the vastness of the sky and the distant  
horizons they looked out across.

The shepherds were told that the sign of God's bursting forth into people's lives, the  
coming of real hope into our daily living, and of light shining in the darkness, was  
present for them to see in the baby, lying in a place where the animals sheltered and  
were fed. John's Gospel describes the coming of Jesus as being like God pitching his  
tent amongst us and moving into the neighbourhood.

And this we are asked to think of as being in a very simple place which is often pictured as a stable, the manger a feeding trough, and including there, a donkey and an ox. This tradition originating from the words in chapter one of the prophet Isaiah who over 500 years previously had encouraged people to notice and be aware how God was to be found, present with and on the side of people in their lives.

The prophet highlighting these two animals, the donkey and the ox, known for their labour as being key to God showing a commitment to all the living world as wonderfully and purposefully created.

And so we have this place represented by our crib where Mary and Joseph could pause for a while and find, however simple the setting, a safe place for their baby to be born. A baby wrapped in cloth for warmth: and in his vulnerability, loved and cared for by Mary and Joseph, who will continue to love and nurture him in the years to come.

This we can reflect on. Perhaps by looking at a picture of the nativity scene or at the crib figures, like the ones that are in our churches.

I have a miniature crib inside a tiny bottle. A message in a bottle of the Good News. God in and through the life of Jesus coming alongside us, pitching his tent with us and alongside all who are struggling or discouraged.

God accessible to us in the vulnerable baby and drawing us into the heart of his light. To be a community, alongside others in their place of need, alert to the needs of all life on earth and on this planet that we share, and so widening that light to bring fullness of life to all.

