



The Free North Church Inverness

a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland

A GUIDE TO SUNDAY WORSHIP

10 & 11 am – Sunday 6th December 2020

Sunday services are conducted today at 10 & 11 am and at 6 pm
by our minister, Rev Angus MacRae. Tel: (01463) 832616.

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Carrie Marlow - Women's Pastoral Worker contacts:

carrie.marlow@freenorthchurch.org or 07583 498782.

This is a guide to our two **Sunday Morning Services**, held live in-person at the Free North Church. Morning Service is broadcast online the Free North YouTube channel at 11 am. The **"Sundays at 6"** evening service is on YouTube only at 6 pm, followed tonight by a time of fellowship on Zoom.

Both broadcast services are available afterwards for catch-up on YouTube.

Subscribe to our channel: youtube.com/c/FreeNorthChurchInverness.

WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP (from Genesis 1:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:5-6)

Minister: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

*Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep,
and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

All: *What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord...*

*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"
made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light
of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. Amen.*

HYMN: 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 to-night.

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 in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!

*Words Phillips Brooks (1835-93). Tune: Forrest Green.
CCL License No. 616262. Streaming No. 324811.*

PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER

Praying for sister churches in POOLEWE & AULTBEA, and GREENOCK.

CHRISTMAS HOPE VIDEO PROJECT & ADVENT RESOURCES

What does HOPE mean to you this Christmas? We'd love to get a short (30-40 second) clip of as many people in the church family as possible answering that question, so we can share the certain hope we have with family and friends this Christmas. We need your clips by the end of WEDNESDAY 9th. Send them to Carrie, or get in touch with her if you have questions or need help recording, on 07583498782 or carrie.marlow@freenorthchurch.org. We also have some advent calendars for the Sunday School children and some advent resources with daily readings and prayers for personal or family use during December. The Scottish Bible Society encourage folk to create a window display to tell the Christmas Story to your street. A silhouette of the stable or a star cut out of black card would also work well. Copies of a Christmas edition of Luke's Gospel are available to give away or enclose with a card or Christmas gift. Our Bible Teaching and songs over the four Sunday mornings of Advent explore gospel themes from some of the best loved Christmas carols. We plan to make an online Carol Service available for Sunday 20th December (6 pm). We would love to have some volunteer readers of all ages to record segments for the service. A short video will be made available to share or show a friend or house guest over the festive period.

BIBLE READINGS: MICAH 5:1-6; MATTHEW 2:1-12

Micah 5:1-6. Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod. ² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." ³ Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labour bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. ⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And he will be our peace when the Assyrians invade our land and march through our fortresses. We will raise against them seven shepherds, even eight commanders, ⁶ who will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with drawn sword. He will deliver us from the Assyrians when they invade our land and march across our borders.

Matthew 2:1-12. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.' ³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" ⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.' ⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

SERMON: MATTHEW 2:3-6 – THE NOT SO LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

Is "*O Little Town of Bethlehem*" in your list of top-ten carols? The song was composed by Phillips Brooks after he spent Christmas-eve in 1865 watching the darkening skies over Bethlehem. While the song is a bit sentimental, it focuses on some very important things. The song points to the prophecy of Micah 5 about the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, a promise fulfilled as recorded in Matthew 2. The carol also challenges us to open up our hearts to welcome Jesus in. **1). A BRIGHT LIGHT IN THIS DARK WORLD.** The people of Bethlehem were blind, completely in the dark about what God was doing in their own town. "*Yet in thy dark*

streets shineth the everlasting light..” Micah spoke to Israel and Judah in dark and oppressive times. God’s people faced destruction from Assyria. But God kept his covenant promises, and he saved them. In time the significance of Bethlehem would become clear. The not-so-little town of David would be the scene of an even greater light and deliverance through the birth of Jesus. 2). A SAVIOUR COMING INTO OUR HEARTS. Jesus is Immanuel, God drawing near. But will Bethlehem welcome its Lord? Will we welcome him? It was just 5 miles from Herod’s palace to Bethlehem, but the Jewish leaders did not bother taking a short journey to meet and welcome their new King. They were offered the witness of scripture and Magi from the East, but remained stubborn. What will it take for your heart to become open to the Saviour? *Invite Christ in. O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin and enter in, Be born in us to-day.*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & COMMITMENT

Gracious God, your glory shines most brightly
in the face of Your beloved Son the Lord Jesus.

In all our darkness and our sinfulness, may His light shine upon us.

We thank you that Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Lord, help us to turn from all darkness to trust and follow Jesus
that we may walk in your light and life for evermore. Amen.

PSALM 91 (Version by John L Bell)

Whoever lives beside the Lord
sheltering in the Almighty's shade,
shall say, “My God, in you I trust,
my safety, my defender.”

From unseen danger and disease
God will keep you safe and sure;
Beneath his wings a place you’ll find,
A refuge from all danger.

You will not dread what darkness brings –
Hidden danger, deadly plague;
Nor will you fear in daylight hours,
the evil that surrounds you.

A thousand may die at your side,
Thousands more fall close at hand;
But with God’s truth for strength and shield,
No threat will ever touch you.

God says, “I’ll save from every harm
Those who know and love my name.
In trouble I will honour them
And show them my salvation.”

*Version by John L Bell. Gaelic Tune from South Uist:
Teann a-nall. © 1993 Wild Goose Publications,
Glasgow. Precentor: Hamish Mackenzie, recorded at
Dingwall Free Church.*

BENEDICTION

SUNDAY AT SIX, live evening worship on our YOUTUBE CHANNEL, from 6 PM tonight.
Christ’s Holiness Mending His Church - Ephesians 4:17-32. (Followed by a Zoom fellowship).

THANKS: The family of the late Nan Burgess would like to thank all the church friends for their prayers, cards, letters, phone calls, flowers and expressions of sympathy. We were humbled and very much encouraged by the love and care shown to us. Mam was so looking forward to meeting her Saviour and because of this we are greatly comforted. May the Lord bless you all. With our love, Brenda & John Macleod.

DIARY & NEWS

IN-PERSON WORSHIP AT THE FREE NORTH: We now offer **TWO morning services** each Sunday, the first at **10 am** (in the Church Hall for 40 minutes, and open to all) and the second at **11 am** (in the church, still subject to a weekly alphabetical split by surname). The split pattern in the next few weeks is: Sundays 6th & 20th December and 3rd January - surnames **A to MacK**. Sundays 13th & 27th December and 10th January - surnames **MacL to Z**. Sunday School is only available at the 11 am service. Families with children are welcome to attend each Sunday. Visitors and folk who cannot attend when it is their "turn" will be welcomed whenever they are able to attend. We do not wish to exclude anyone who wishes to attend or to put pressure on anyone to return, for example if they are in a high-risk group or have health concerns. Online worship will continue to be provided at 11 am and 6 pm each Sunday for those worshipping at home. Access to both morning services is by the Church Street Lane entrance. The 10 am service will exit by the Church Hall lane leading to Church Street to avoid congestion between those exiting and others arriving. **Please DO NOT attend church if you experience any symptoms of Covid-19.** We maintain a discrete record of all who attend for contact tracing. When you come to church try to arrive in good time and bring a face covering (unless exempt). If you need water bring your own bottle and any books, bibles, or children's toys and materials that you may require. Worshippers may be seated with other household members or with someone in their social "bubble".

Monday: Guy's Groups meet on Zoom at 10.00 am and 7.00 pm, with the usual log-in. ('Men Need Competence' –pages 95-108). Use the usual Zoom log-in. **Chris MacLeod** is running catch-up sessions for any who missed earlier studies. **Email Martin** at office@freenorthchurch.org for details of **Chris MacLeod's Zoom meetings**.

Wednesday Prayer: Join us in person in the Hall and online on Zoom at 7.30 pm. (Our prayer gatherings and Home Groups meet online only on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. Use the usual Zoom log-on and passwords).

Thursday: Women's Bible Study, 10.30 am and 7.45 pm. Zoom details from Carrie.

Next Sunday: We will share in **COMMUNION** at the 10 and 11 am services. Contact the minister, any elder or our women's pastoral worker to discuss church membership. The bread and wine will be prepared following strict guidance for hygiene by a person with a Food Handling Certificate. Individual servings of bread and wine will be placed conveniently on tables in the hall or at the end of each pew in use from the outset of the service for the convenient use of communicants. This will prevent the need to pass common plates and cups around. If you require gluten-free bread, we suggest you bring this with you.

The Record magazine: We will order back-copies of the *Record* for subscribers. Issues from April 2020 onwards can be downloaded free from: <https://freechurch.org/resources/magazines>. New subscriptions will run from January 2021. Advise the Church Office, or Donalda MacKenzie, if you wish to cancel a subscription or wish to set up a new subscription. Previous subscribers who wish to continue need do nothing.

Give a Book this Christmas: CYC has a Christian bookstall with a selection of Christmas cards and books for all ages open on Saturdays (2 – 4 pm), and on Tuesdays and Thursdays (10 – 11 am). See the CYC Facebook page for more. Orders can be submitted to rfinlay@toucansurf.com if you are unable to visit (pay by cash or cheque). Parking may be available. Ring the bell at CYC for access.

If you need help of any sort, we would love to hear from you. Contact the minister (07 506 006 459; angusmacrae1967@gmail.com), any elder or deacon, or the church office (office@freenorthchurch.org).

Support the Free North: Donate through our website (PayPal logo), the offering box, or via our treasurer, Mrs Barbara Macphail, 31 Towerhill Avenue, IV2 5FX. (01463 794622, treasurer@freenorthchurch.org).