

**Materials for Virtual Worship - Sunday, 7 February 2021  
The Second Sunday before Lent - Sexagesima**

**Please use this material with the order of Virtual Service for  
the Linton Team of Churches Ordinary Time**

**Collects**

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,  
now and for ever.

*Or*

Almighty God,  
give us reverence for all creation  
and respect for every person,  
that we may mirror your likeness  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Readings**

**Proverbs 8: 1,22-31**

**The Gifts of Wisdom**

Does not wisdom call,  
and does not understanding raise her voice?

**Wisdom's Part in Creation**

The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,  
the first of his acts of long ago.  
Ages ago I was set up,  
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

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When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.  
Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth—  
when he had not yet made earth and fields,  
or the world's first bits of soil.  
When he established the heavens, I was there,  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
when he made firm the skies above,  
when he established the fountains of the deep,  
when he assigned to the sea its limit,  
so that the waters might not transgress his command,  
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
then I was beside him, like a master worker;  
and I was daily his delight,  
rejoicing before him always,  
rejoicing in his inhabited world  
and delighting in the human race

#### **John 1: 1-14**

##### **The Word Became Flesh**

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 came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his

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own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

#### **Reflection**

Proverbs 8.1,22-31 John 1.1-14 +

#### **Contemplating the Word and Wisdom of God in Jesus**

This year in our cycle of Sunday readings, most of the Gospel passages will be taken from St Mark. Of course, there are some exceptions, like last week's, when we were thinking about Christ's Presentation in the Temple – a story that's only recorded in Luke's Gospel. But most of the stories we'll hear for the rest of the year will be from Mark.

And Mark's is a very busy Gospel. So many of the incidents are prefaced by, 'immediately', 'at once', or 'straight away' as Jesus travelled round Galilee teaching and healing, and the sense of crowds pressing-in nearly all the time can seem overwhelming, if you give the Gospel a continuous reading. Maybe some of you have been lucky enough to see an actor doing a complete performance of St Mark's Gospel? Alec McCowen made a great success of it on the London stage about 30 years ago. I was fortunate enough to see it, and I found it all quite breathless, really. It's a break-neck Gospel, one story after another comes tumbling in.

But just now, like an exclamation mark in the middle of a sentence, we had a Gospel reading which wasn't like that. It wasn't from St Mark, either We'll hear lots from St Mark's busy narrative later in the year, but just now, we're asked to stop and ponder the depths beneath it all – the depths plumbed by St John in his Gospel, who tells us that in this

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purposeful rabbi, always moving on, we see the Word, the image, the embodied purpose of God himself.

We may associate the words we heard this morning, particularly with Christmas, when this Prologue to St John's Gospel asks us to contemplate in the babe of Bethlehem *'the glory as of a father's only Son.'* But here they are again today, the second Sunday before Lent, asking us to contemplate the darkness threatening the light, the Word's own people rejecting him when he as he turns towards the Passion. At this point in the year, we've left Christmas behind, and we look towards the cross. By having a reading from St John's Gospel before all our Lenten readings, about Jesus' road to suffering, we're being reminded that there was a deeper story going on than what appeared on the surface of those events – the deeper story of God's eternal being and purpose, his eternal intention to come as light into a dark world to redeem it.

It's good at this point to stop and be a bit contemplative – to reflect on what light and darkness mean to us... to ask ourselves how far into our own lives the light has shone, and what remains in darkness, hidden and un-dealt with....

It's good, too, to ponder the word 'life', because St John allies it so closely with light: *'in him was life, and the life was the light of all people'* (John 1.3,4). Later on, in his Gospel, he has Jesus saying that came that people might *'have life, and have it abundantly'* (John 10.10) – and, indeed, that he is *'the Way, the Truth, the Life'* (John 14.6). What does the word 'life' mean to us, when we hear these sayings? How far are we living in its fullness, and passing on its abundance to others?

And then, there are truth and grace – the truth that the Word proclaims by his very being about the Father, and the grace which *'from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace'* (John 1.16).

These are the things which the deeper story, - the story which underlies the hectic narrative of the Gospels - is all about; light, life, truth, and grace, coming into the world and confronting their opposites; turning things around, so that we can be set free from darkness, death, falsehood and fear.

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*'In the beginning was the Word'* – the creative God, who spoke creation once, and brought it to be with his Wisdom, speaks now in Jesus once again, bringing to birth a new creation, and in his wisdom suffering to bring it about.

Hang on to these words, these concepts, as you go through Lent and Passiontide – the *light* shining in encircling darkness, yet never extinguished; the *life* which pours itself out, yet is never conquered; the *truth*, which is gainsaid by clamorous voices, but never silenced; the *grace*, which is rejected by human pride and hatred, but persists in patience to win the day.

Light, life, truth, grace: God's Word to us – our word to the world...

Ponder these things in your life – and in the life of this Christian community; pray that you individually, and we together, may embody more fully light, life, truth and grace, in lives which, however difficult or stressful, can never be more demanding or self-sacrificial than that of the carpenter of Nazareth, the Word and Wisdom of God.

Canon Maggie Guite

### All creatures of our God and King

1. All creatures of our God and King,  
lift up your voice and with us sing  
alleluia, alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam,  
thou silver moon with softer gleam:

*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

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2. Dear mother earth, who day by day  
unfoldest blessings on our way,  
O praise Him, alleluia!  
The flow'rs and fruits that in thee grow,  
let them his glory also show.  
*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

3. Let all things their Creator bless,  
and worship him in humbleness,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,  
and praise the Spirit, Three in One.

*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

William Henry Draper based on St Francis of Assisi

### The perfect wisdom of our God

1. The perfect wisdom of our God,  
Revealed in all the universe:  
All things created by His hand,  
And held together at His command.  
He knows the myst'ries of the seas,  
The secrets of the stars are His;  
He guides the planets on their way  
And turns the earth through another day.
2. The matchless wisdom of His ways  
That mark the path of righteousness;  
His word a lamp unto my feet,  
His Spirit teaching and guiding me.  
And, oh, the mystery of the cross,  
That God should suffer for the lost,  
So that the fool might shame the wise  
And all the glory might go to Christ.

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- grant me wisdom from above,  
To pray for peace and cling to love,  
And teach me humbly to receive  
The sun and rain of Your sovereignty.  
Each strand of sorrow has a place  
Within this tapestry of grace;  
So through the trials I choose to say:  
'Your perfect will in Your perfect way.'

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty 2011  
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### Closing Prayer

God our creator,  
by your gift  
the tree of life was set at the heart of the earthly paradise,  
and the bread of life at the heart of your Church:  
may we who have been nourished at your table on earth  
be transformed by the glory of the Saviour's cross  
and enjoy the delights of eternity;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**