Greetings!
For those living in or near Farmborough, a reminder that we shall be singing (socially distanced) carols outdoors at certain points in the village. We will not be knocking at doors, but if you'd like to make a donation to NSPCC/Children's Society, that would be great. You are warmly welcome to join us or, if you can't do that, sing a verse or two of a carol with us on your doorstep.

On Friday 18th December, from 7pm to around 8.30pm, we are visiting The Mead, Tilley Close, part of Timsbury Road (opposite the Butcher's Arms), Bellifants and Bridge Gardens Details with rough timings on a notice near you. We will also sing carols on Monday 21st and Wednesday 23rd December at other parts of the village.

Now to the music etc. to accompany this week's service. Actually, last week's choices would have been even more appropriate for this week!

Here is the Rembrandt picture of John the Baptist preaching in a pool of light:
23930090935_727c4a478d_b.jpg (1024×683) (staticflickr.com)

Our opening hymn is O come, O come, Emmanuel, from Chet Valley churches, with words and some nice mountain scenery:
https://youtu.be/kKu0or0t8Uw

There's a nice a cappella arrangement of the Latin version of the hymn by Zoltan Kodaly, here sung by a choir from Zagreb:
https://youtu.be/z_22bhg67fg

or a version by Enya, with some electronic help:
https://youtu.be/DPHh3nMMu-I

The words of Psalm 126 vv 5-6 are set by Brahms in the first chorus of his German Requiem, here with a rolling score for singers (German words). The text starts with Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. He then sets the psalm verses, when the music becomes radiant, especially at the words "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy", before the music gently subsides, returning to the beatitude. It is conducted here by Nicholas Harnoncourt, who takes it at a faster tempo than many (it can often sound stodgy) – can't identify the performers:
https://youtu.be/olaZ2AOOfdg

Here's a nice little number about John the Baptist by the Ball Brothers:
https://youtu.be/EYqUTvO1xLk

For kids of any age, the story of John:
https://youtu.be/7NMHOLPWeTM

Hope you enjoy!
Chris

SERVICE for the **THIRD SUNDAY in ADVENT**

O God, our Father, we have come to you now that you may make us able to walk in your light, to act in your strength, to think in your wisdom, to speak in your truth, to live in your love, so that when all the days are done we may come to dwell in your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *(William Barclay)*

CONFESSION Lord Jesus Christ, light shining in our darkness; have mercy on our tired and doubting hearts. Renew in us the courage we need, to bring to completion the work your calling has begun in us. *(Taizé)* *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the robe of righteousness. (from Isaiah 61.10)*

COLLECT O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you; grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READINGS Isaiah61.1-4,8-end, Psalm 126, 1Thessalonians 5.16-24, John1.6-8,19-28.

REFLECTION John the Baptist is portrayed as a wild-looking figure, dressed in a coat made with camel hair and eating an eccentric diet. However, he is a major figure, a bridge between the Old and New Testament; Jesus himself praised him. At the time John's gospel was written, and for several years after, many believed John the Baptist to be the Messiah, but in today's reading he stresses that he is *not* "the light" but a witness to it; he is not even worthy to perform the most menial task, to untie Jesus' sandal strap.
Baptism in the river Jordan was a ceremonial act for Gentiles wishing to be accepted in the Jewish faith; yet, to the annoyance of the priests and Levites, John was also baptizing Jews, including Jesus himself. John's greatness lies in his humility. He knew his role was to prepare people for the coming of Jesus, to bear witness to the light that had already existed before the beginning of time. He had to stand aside when Jesus took centre stage. Rembrandt portrayed John preaching in a pool of light, to people in a wilderness of darkness. The challenge for each one of us is to humble ourselves before God, to allow something of his light to shine through us.

PRAYERS. Father, through John the Baptist you tried to prepare your people for the coming of Jesus. Will you try to prepare us too? Prepare our hearts and minds that we may know what to look for in the coming of Jesus Christ into our world. *(NCEC Prayers before worship).*
We pray for the many parts of the world where there is desolation, where your light is hidden by warfare, deception and disease.
We bring before you the sick and suffering, those affected by Covid-19 physically, mentally or financially, those whom we name in the silence of our hearts…….
We give thanks for your many gifts to us, for the intricate beauty of your created world, for your gifts of artistic beauty and scientific endeavour, for the glimpses in this world of your heavenly realm.



We say the **LORD'S PRAYER**
We share **THE GRACE**

FINAL PRAYER May the God of peace himself sanctify us entirely; and may our spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(adapted from I Thess. 5.23)