Dear friend
I am pleased to enclose this week's virtual service, prepared by Judith.

For Farmborough residents, a reminder that we will be singing carols around the village on Monday and Wednesday evening from 7pm (details in Trio/Flyer/Farmborough Folk etc).

In this week's service for Advent 4, we focus on Mary, the mother of Jesus.

To sing along, the hymn version of her song of praise, the Magnificat, Tell out my soul, sung at Arundel Cathedral:
https://youtu.be/3E7QWLyDWe8

One of the most well-known English language versions of the Magnificat is Stanford in G, here with music to sing along:
https://youtu.be/g7UorDdRg60

Or Howells' Coll Reg setting, sung, appropriately, by King's under Stephen Cleobury:
https://youtu.be/fpB9mQHORlg

Here is part of John Rutter's boisterous setting of the Latin words of the Magnificat:
https://youtu.be/K9YRn0BVmWM

For some quiet meditation , make yourself comfortable and listen to Jean Mouton's sublime 8-part hymn to the Virgin, Nesciens Mater, sung individually during lockdown by Siglo de Oro, and carefully pasted together:
https://youtu.be/FBkfo0xVjZU

After Mouton, it has to be lamb! William Blake's Christmas poem "Little lamb, who made thee", has been set memorably by John Tavener, and here is a beautiful rendition by Tenebrae:
https://youtu.be/h-mSmEfLmZc;

Finally, for something a bit more upbeat, Ken Burton's arrangement of The Virgin had a baby boy, sung by the Oxford Choir:
https://youtu.be/EjVGf1dz848

Happy listening/singing!
Chris.

Sunday 20th December – 4th Sunday of Advent



Gracious God, we thank you that you made yourself known to someone without power, wealth or status, and we praise you for the courage of Mary, this young woman from Galilee, whose 'Yes' to the shame and shock of bearing your Son let loose the unstoppable power of love which changed the world. *(Angela Ashwin)*

CONFESSION O Lord, open our minds to see ourselves as you see us, and from all unwillingness to know our weakness and our sin, Good Lord, deliver us. *(Peter Nott)*

May Almighty God, who sent his Son into the world to save sinners, bring us his pardon and peace, now and for ever. Amen.
(Common Worship)

COLLECT God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS 2 Samuel 7: 1-11,16; Psalm 89: 1-8, (or the Magnificat- Luke 1: 46-55); Romans 16: 25-end; Luke 1: 26-38

REFLECTION The picture of the annunciation which we have in our minds may be affected by centuries of romantic paintings, and our experience of beautiful images on Christmas cards, not to mention nativity plays or tableaux in churches and schools. The real thing was far from romantic. Mary, probably no more than what we would call a teenager, was terrified. *She* describes the encounter with the angel in the gospel account: no one else was there at the time. If she reports that the angel says, 'Don't be afraid,' then we know that she *was* afraid. The whole scenario of unmarried motherhood was very scary indeed – rejection by family, possible stoning to death, to name but two of the regular punishments for young women facing illegitimacy. The wonder of this account lies in Mary's acceptance and obedience. Paul uses the phrase 'obedience of faith.' Mary, brought up in the faith that a Messiah would one day redeem Israel, accepts her part in this wondrous story. 'Let it be with me according to your word.'

PRAYERS *Almighty God, so fill us with your grace, that we in all things may accept your holy will and with Mary, full of grace, rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

We pray for the church, remembering, as we approach a very different Christmas, the thousands of persecuted Christians who cannot worship publicly at all. Bless them, and help us all to accept minor inconveniences this year.

We pray for the sick and suffering, the lonely, the anxious and the bereaved. We continue to pray for all those affected by Covid-19 and for all who are caring for them; for those suffering from other problems and less able to receive treatment.

We bring those who are in our minds at this time before you now……..

We pray for the homeless, and give thanks for the agencies and individuals who will be caring for the needy this Christmas and beyond, in our country, and throughout the world.

WE SAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

WE SHARE THE GRACE

FINAL PRAYER Lord Jesus, grant us the double joy of Mary and Elizabeth: the joy of carrying you in our hearts, and the joy of recognising you in the hearts of others, that out of joy may come praise, telling out the greatness of God our Saviour. Amen.
(Susan Williams)