Greetings!
I am pleased to enclose this week's service, prepared by Judith.

To warm up your vocal cords, the hymn On Jordan's bank, sung by Chet Valley churches:
https://youtu.be/pIr21lLgFpg

Derived from the Isaiah reading, Judith has suggested "Every valley shall be exalted", a wonderfully flamboyant aria from Handel's Messiah, sung by Kurt Streit with the English Consort, directed by Trevor Pinnock, who introduces it.
https://youtu.be/vCLUhVkCoPE

Returning to John the Baptiser, choristers may like to sing with the rolling score of "This is the record of John" (Jack's disc) by Orlando Gibbons, sung by Rogers Covey Crump with the choir of Magdalen College:
https://youtu.be/a9pE5vrgBHQ

The first few verses of Mark's gospel are paraphrased in one of my favourite worship songs, "My Lord, he is a -coming soon", sung by the choir of St Mary's Wargrave:
https://youtu.be/00OskJ0g5rY

and quoted in this clip from Godspell (Prepare ye the way of the Lord):
https://youtu.be/wSIs1MHdFQY

Finally, if you are a little confused about the Government's Covid concessions for Christmas, the enclosed cartoon, stolen from Private Eye, may be enlightening...



With every blessing
Chris

Sunday 6th December – 2nd in Advent



Lord Jesus Christ, Wisdom and Word of God, through the gift of your Holy Spirit come and dwell within us, that from the overflowing of our thankful hearts our mouths may proclaim your praise; now and for ever. Amen
(Christina Rossetti, 1830-94)

CONFESSION
Lord God, wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation. *From Ps 51*
May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins and restore us in his image, to the praise and glory of his name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (Common Worship)

COLLECT Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and Saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God.

READINGS Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2,8-13;2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8.

REFLECTION 'The beginning of the good news…' So begins Mark's gospel. We, with hindsight, think we know what is to come; at the time, John the Baptiser's listeners simply see an extraordinary figure and hear an extraordinary promise. He is compelling, drawing huge crowds to hear the message of repentance followed by forgiveness of sins, an echo of so much of the foretelling of the early prophets; so many of them who spoke out, letting people know of God's desires for his people. The passage from Isaiah, its wording so familiar and so beautiful, nevertheless betrays the urgency Isaiah felt as he communicated with the exiles in Babylon. The people were 'like grass', here today and gone tomorrow, but 'the word of our God will stand for ever.' Isaiah spells out the promise of God's faithfulness to the people of Israel. John speaks of the same love, with the added and wonderful promise of the coming of the Messiah. Peter, knowing at first hand the Messiah's message, his need for his people's readiness for his coming again, writes …'the Lord is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.' And the same message goes on…

PRAYERS
'I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."' (Isaiah 6:8)

Draw your Church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving him in his mission to the world, and together witnessing to his love on every continent and island. (NZ Prayer Book)

Lord, We pray for the world and all its peoples, and especially for refugees and all displaced families; for those who are hungry or who live in fear. We thank you for all who minister to those in need.

We pray for the sick and suffering; for those with Covid-19 and for all who have other health problems. We give thanks for all doctors and nurses, especially those who will work so hard to administer the vaccines as they become available.

We pray for those who mourn, and all who are in any other kind of need, naming those we have in our own minds at this time……

WE SAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

WE SHARE THE GRACE

AND FINALLY:
'We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth!'