Dear friend

I enclose this week's virtual service.

To warm up our vocal cords, this week's hymn is 'Come thou long expected Jesus', set by John Stainer (originally in his oratorio Crucifixion) to Charles Wesley's words, and sung by the choir of St John's College, Cambridge:
https://youtu.be/JEEd0uWnDGs

'Rejoice in the Lord alway', the text from Philippians, is most popularly sing in Purcell's setting. Here it is in a delightful setting by an anonymous renaissance composer, sung by the choir of Westminster Abbey, with a score to sing along:
https://youtu.be/azVITZ-zNAs

Judith Weir's 'Drop down ye heavens' (Advent Prose) is sung by Peterhouse Chapel choir, directed by Simon Jackson:
https://youtu.be/t_8dKBfO-bA

Paul M Harvey sings words from Isaiah 40, 'Prepare a way for the Lord':
https://youtu.be/k0BkKvwkBu4

And finally, from Martin, a charming carol for Advent/Christmas, 'Tell Me', a new carol by Rachel Chaplin:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p312nthaFsM

Advent Greetings!
Chris

VIRTUAL SERVICE 12.12.21
THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

We must praise thy goodness, that thou hast left nothing undone to draw us to thyself. But one thing we ask of thee, our God, not to cease thy work in our improvement. Let us tend towards thee, no matter by what means, and be fruitful in good works, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Ludwig Van Beethoven)*

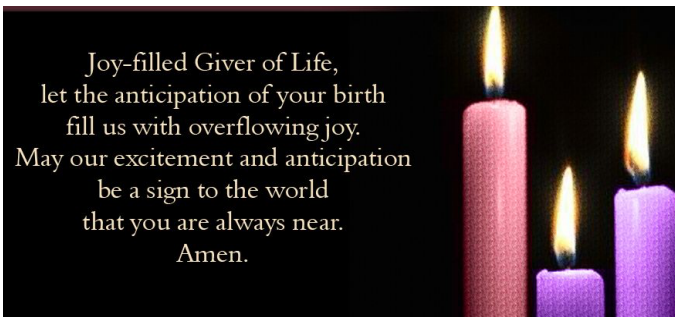
CONFESSION Father, we deplore that in so rich a world we tolerate poverty so harsh that men and women are embittered by it, and children die or survive deprived in body, mind or spirit. Forgive our ignorance, our indifference, and our unwillingness to give the right priority to this responsibility. *(CAFOD) Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our fellow men throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands this day their daily bread, and by our understanding love, give peace and joy.* (*Mother Teresa of Calcutta)*.

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 Zephaniah 3.14-end, Isaiah 12.2-6, Philippians 4.4-7, Luke 3. 7-18.

REFLECTION John the Baptist's preaching is harsh and uncompromising. He likens his audience to a "brood of vipers". Doubtless many were decent citizens who kept the law and observed religious duties; they felt secure since they were descendants of Abraham, God's chosen people. John's warning of judgement applies to his listeners, but also to all of us, however diligent churchgoers, when we live in comfort while others starve, when we are apathetic in the face of injustice. Yet he offers a solution, singling out two groups of people who were generally feared and hated, tax collectors (who pocketed extra money for themselves) and "soldiers" (often corrupt Judeans enlisted to serve the puppet king, Herod Antipas), instructing them to perform their duties honourably and justly. God doesn't call us to be something different from ourselves; he knows we are imperfect, and we make a mess of things. If, in our prayers, we can ask him "what should we do?" his Holy Spirit can set to work in us; each one of us, in our own idiosyncratic way, can bear fruit and make a difference. As Mother Teresa put it, "Do small things, but with great love".

PRAYERS We pray for your church here on earth, that as individuals and collectively we may stand up for human rights, oppose oppression and support the needy.
We pray for the nations of the world torn apart by conflict, including the troubled areas of the Middle East and Ethiopia, for those fearing war in Ukraine, for refugees and prisoners of conscience. Teach us your peace. Comfort and heal all who are sick or wounded in mind, body or spirit. We pray for the distressed, and those mourning loved ones. In the silence of our hearts we pray for…….



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We say the **LORD'S PRAYER**
We share **THE GRACE**
F**INAL PRAYER** Father in heaven, the day draws near when the glory of your Son will make radiant the night of the waiting world. May the lure of greed not impede us from the joy which moves the hearts of those who seek him. May the darkness not blind us to the vision of wisdom which fills the minds of those who find him. *(Roman Missal).*