

The Song of the Shepherds

We were familiar with the night.
We knew its favourite colours,
its sullen silence
and its small, disturbing sounds,
its unprovoked rages,
its savage dreams.

We slept by turns,
attentive to the flock.
We said little.

Night after night, there was little to say.
But sometimes one of us,
skilled in that way,
would pipe a tune of how things were for us.

They say that once, almost before time,
the stars with shining voices
serenaded
the new born world.
The night could not contain their boundless praise.
We thought that just a poem —
until the night
a song of solar glory,
unutterable, unearthly,
eclipsed the luminaries of the night,
as though the world were exorcised of dark
and, coming to itself, began again.

Later we returned to the flock.
The night was ominously black.
The stars were silent as the sheep.
Nights pass, year on year.
We clutch our meagre cloaks against the cold.
Our aging piper's fumbling fingers play,
night after night,
an earthly echo of the song that banished dark.
It has stayed with us.

Richard Bauckham



29th November 2023

Extract from next Sunday's Reading: Luke 2: 1-20. (The Message)

8-12 There were shepherds camping in the neighbourhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Saviour has just been born in David's town, a Saviour who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

13-14 At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

With the shepherds of Bethlehem

help us, Lord, to run with haste to meet you,

to see your face in the faces of others

and to wake from our sleep as a new world is being born.

With the angels of Bethlehem

help us, oh Lord, to tell the whole world of your presence

God is with us!

Let us create peace amongst people; **and work for justice amongst nations.**

With Jesus, the infant Christ

help us, oh Lord, to cherish the hope that is born at Advent,

to hear the calling of your people,

to nurture the seeds of your Kingdom

and through our actions to be messengers of your love

here and throughout the world.

We are sleepy shepherds – **forgive us Lord.**

We are un-heralding angels – **forgive us Lord.**

With grateful hearts – **we accept Your forgiveness in Jesus' name.**

We pray for people, places & concerns

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer.**

My Notes

Leader: Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night

All: **Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.**



Pray for Julie's phased return
And for Laurence, Josiah & Esther
Tom & Phyllis



CHURCH LIFE

Pray for tonight's 'Fish 'n' Film' Night
Pray for SU groups at Craighead
Pray for Mangerama on 3rd Dec.
The Guild and The Fellowship
Café Connect & Baby & Toddlers.
5 Marks of Mission Response forms
Kirk Session – change to Teams
Youth Groups and the BB
Discussions re Union.
This month's charity Samaritan's
Purse
Care Homes
Our Praise Band



LOCAL CONCERNS

Our local Primary & Secondary
Schools .
Young folk at Uni/College
Community Council

WORLD CONCERNS

Middle East Crisis

COP28 in Dubai (Begins 30th Nov)
Morocco/Libya: Ukraine/Russia
Middle East; Eritrea; Sudan;

**Pray not for Arab or Jew,
for Palestinian or Israeli,
but pray rather for ourselves,
that we might not
divide them in our prayers
but keep them both together
in our hearts.**

PEOPLE (See notes)

AS COP BEGINS

**Dear Sustaining God
in Scotland, we've been here:
we hosted COP
and made the most
of getting together,
sticking our necks out
marching, protesting encouraging.
It did some good, thank God Though not enough,
as the sweltering Earth
in person assures us breathlessly groaning,
and lashing out.
with fire and flood and drought.
And so this time round
when still, so much could come
of the gathering
and mutual encouragement of nations
yet when disappointment and frustration
seem part of the process
simply, help us
from the outset,
to wish them well:
the scientists who compare notes
the indigenous folk, who bring wisdom the protest-
ers,
who hold it all to account
and even the ludicrous greenwashers
and lackeys of pollution
that on the Road to Damascus
or even Dubai
they may be inspired
to practice what they proclaim.
We pray for the strengthening
of the voices of the smaller nations; For the laugh-
ter
that brings down unjust thrones;
the faith that shouts Hosanna!
God Help Us!
Hallelujah anyway!
And bless and use
the Great Green Circus of the nations
for justice in Heaven and Earth. AMEN**