



Sunday 20th December 2020
"Reflective" Christmas Service

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.



Introduction

Lighting of the Advent IV Candles

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;

**Those living in the land of deep
darkness a light has dawned.**

The lights that we have kindled each
week light the way to the coming Christ.

**The candles of Hope, Preparation, and
Joy glow brilliantly. Today, we light the
candle of Love.** (light candle)

The coming Lord is forever faithful.
The never-ending affection and
tenderness the Christ has for us
is a gift that is unequalled.

**Praising the God who cares so deeply
for all creation, we light this candle.
Together, we will demonstrate and
share the love of Christ. Amen**

'As we watched at dead of night,
lo, we saw a wondrous light:
angels, singing 'Peace on earth,'
told us of the Saviour's birth.'

Hail, the ever-blessèd morn!

Hail, redemption's happy dawn!

Sing through all Jerusalem:

Christ is born in Bethlehem!

Edward Caswall (1814-1878)

This morning we meet in the name of a
loving God **A God who knows our
needs, Hears our cries
And heals our wounds.**

Let us Pray

Come, God-with-us:

Who braves our rejection and hurt,
Who holds us in acceptance and love.

Come God-for-us:

Who whispers in our ears
That each of us are beloved children.

Come God-under-us:

Who cradles us in arms that never grow
weary; Whose lap has room for all.

Come, God-over-us:

Who watches in the long silence of the
night, That we might rest in peace.

Come, God-beside-us:

Who steadies us when we falter, Who
lifts us up when we fall.

Come, God-behind-us:

Who picks up all the faded dreams We
drop along the way,
And patchworks them into hope.

O come, O come, Immanuel:

And we will rejoice for ever.

Amen.

1 O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

2 O come, O come, O Lord of might
who to your tribes, on Sinai's height,
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe:

3 O come, O Rod of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave:

4 O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery:

5 O come, O Day-spring, come & cheer
our spirits by your advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Latin, 18th century,
based on the ancient Advent Antiphons
translated by John M Neale (1818-1866)

John 1: 1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of humankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Song: Make Room

"Is there room in your heart"

Family hiding from the storm
Found no place at the keeper's door
It was for this a Child was born
To save a world so cold and hollow

The sleeping town did not know
That lying in a manger low
A Saviour King who had no home
Has come to heal our sorrows

*Is there room in your heart
Is there room in your heart
Is there room in your heart
For God to write His story
You can come as you are
But it may set you apart
When you make room
in your heart and trade your
dreams for His glory
Make room in your heart
Make room in your heart*

Shepherds counting sheep in the night:
Do not fear the glory light
You are precious in His sight
God has come to raise the lowly, so...
(chorus)

Mother holds the Promise tight
Every wrong will be made right
The road is straight and the burden's light
For in His hands He holds tomorrow
(Chorus)



(Mark Hall, Matt Maher)
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Superintendent Rev'd Dawn:

Preparing for Christmas can be thrilling, or it can be daunting. I think for most of the world right now, everything feels a bit daunting. I wonder if people have done less or focussed less on the busyness that consumes us sometimes at this time of year.

Firstly, there is choosing the tree, well I don't know about you but that is a whole job in itself. We like a real tree, but we (I say we, I mean me really) like it to be symmetrical. So quite a major task.

Then there is the process of getting all the decorations up, untangling the lights can be a challenge and each year I am determined to put them away really tidily – but that never quite happens.

Then the task of shopping for Christmas gifts. I love buying gifts for people for Christmas, I just don't like the hustle and bustle in the shops that accompanies that. And I do love my food but it can get a bit overwhelming.

So it is this mayhem of activity and our memories of the past that spring up, sometimes surprisingly, that can compete with the joy that should be at the fore of our hearts and minds at this time of year. At the heart of this eternal event was good news of great joy and if we reflect on this first encounter with Christ, we may find ourselves capturing that joy ourselves. Perhaps the challenges of a "scaled down" Christmas have reminded us of the humble beginnings of our Lord and Saviour.

I read a story about a church that was organising a crib service. There was a little boy who was a shepherd. He was an energetic little boy. During the practices he was all over the place, he was distracting the other children and the poor lady trying to organise the service was a bit of a wreck after trying to co-ordinate things.

She was particularly concerned and really worried about how this young and lively lad would cope with a live performance. During the rehearsals they had used a baby doll for baby Jesus. During the actual service, the couple playing Joseph & Mary put their own real baby in the manger.

The young boy was a bit fidgety during the service and was edging over towards the manger...Suddenly he saw that it was a real, live baby, and he yelled out loud – **"He's alive!"**

Of course everyone laughed but then there was a silence that overcame the church as people realised the truth in his words. **"He's alive!"**

That's why Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. Because the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil 4:7). God sent His Son to be born in Bethlehem, quiet humble beginnings not a mighty extravagance, So although for most of us Christmas will be different, may we reflect on that first Christmas and seek out that joy which hope brings.

Come thou long expected Jesus

1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus, Born
to set thy people free,

From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in thee

2 Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth thou art; Dear
desire of every nation,

Joy of every longing heart.

3 Born thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us for ever,
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.

4 By thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all-sufficient merit
Raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayers of Intercessions

Loving God,
this is the season for miracles
and we pray for one today.

Where there is sorrow,
**we pray for your grace to light the
darkness.**

Where is despair,
**we pray for your hope to light the
darkness.**

Where there is hatred,
**we pray for your forgiveness to light
the darkness.**

Where there is war,
**we pray for your love to light the
darkness.**

Where there is confusion,
**we pray for your peace to light the
darkness.**

Where there is injustice,
**we pray for your courage to light the
darkness.**

Where there is fear
**we pray for your joy to light the
darkness.**

It is the season for miracles
and we pray for one today:
**Come, Lord Jesus, may your light
come into our world. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father...*

Joy to the world,
the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods,
rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness
And wonders of his love.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Blessing:

Loving God, as we journey from this space
together. May we wait confidently as we
watch your plans unfold. May God bless
us all with comfort, joy and strength as we
live out your love here in your world. May
Jesus' love shine out from us like the light
of our Advent candles, bright, beautiful
and drawing people to bathe in their
warmth. This Christmas may we share 'a
love all lovely, a love divine' your love for
our world. **Amen.**