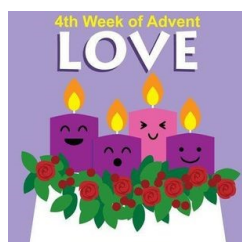




Newsletter



20th December 2020



John 3:16-19, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

THIS NOTICE SHEET WILL SERVE 2 WEEKS.

Hopefully you should have received this year's UMC carol service on CD. If anybody doesn't have a CD player, please contact Terry and Jacquie as they have a few spare which they are happy to lend out should you need to borrow one.

Jenny Hall would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. She hasn't been able to send cards to her friends this year, so will be donating to charity instead.

Happy Birthday to Fred who will be celebrating his birthday on the 28th December and to Anita who has her birthday on the 2nd January. Hope you both have a lovely day.

Brian Gameson sends his best wishes to you all for Christmas. He is keeping well.

Sadly, we have heard this week that Ethel Douglas has passed away. Ethel was originally a member at Shoebury, but had lived in Hertfordshire for a few years. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family.

Christmas blessings are sent to you all and we trust you will find some peace over the Christmas period. It is not easy at the moment but hopefully better times are ahead.

Jacquie

A Tier Christmas!

Hello from the Manse!

Happy Christmas, I hope you and yours have a blessed time.

So as of Wednesday, we went into tier three. I'm sure that the news is disappointing but all through 2020 we have found a way to co-exist, protect each other and with the news of a vaccine, the future looks better. I'm sure 2021 will look much better.

What's your favourite Christmas tradition? In our household it's preparing to go to sleep on Christmas Eve. I still remember when the boys were younger how they put food out for Father Christmas. For my youngest it's Christmas cracker jokes. I think everyone loves decorating the tree.

Little Johnny and his family were having Christmas dinner at his Grandmother's house. Everyone was seated around the table as the food was being served. When Little Johnny received his plate, he started eating right away. 'Johnny! Please wait until we say our prayer.' said his mother. 'I don't need to,' the boy replied. 'Of course, you do,' his mother insisted. 'We always say a prayer before eating at our house.' 'That's at our house,' Johnny explained. 'But this is Grandma's house, and she knows how to cook!'

Well we're in the final stretch of Christmas 2020, I'm sure you have been looking forward to Christmas as much as Johnny has been to his Christmas dinner. As I was searching for something to say this year at Christmas it's hit me that we aren't the only ones who look forward to Christmas. After everything was said and done God must be too. I've never thought of Christmas from God's side before! I always thought it would be hard for the father to see his son go down to earth. Must be hard to entrust your most precious gift to someone else's keeping. A baby defenceless, completely valuable and God is helpless to do anything but watch.

This year it's hit me the other way around. Imagine you had built something, you had to watch over it, fix it when it needs to be done. Then watch it as others destroy it, you would put a plan together to stop it happening again. You would be quite excited as the plan started to take place and when the day came you were to act on your plan, you would be very happy that all those things you had thought about was happening.

The bible tells us that God tried many plans, too many to count none of them work. Finally, God had worked it out. Knew it would work. So, God must have been looking forward to Christmas as much as we are? What about now?

Two weeks ago, it was Jude's birthday. We were up very, very early. There was a lot of excitement in the manse before daylight, an hour when there shouldn't be that much excitement. Jude of course never remembers the day he entered the world but he celebrates it because it's special. Jesus will never remember the day he entered the world but I'm sure he celebrates because it's special.

So, whether looking forward or looking back, God must be looking forward to Christmas as much as each of us every year. What it reminds him is the hope he wanted to give and what it reminds us is the hope we received. It's thought it was at Christmas that God's plan started and Easter when the final piece was in place. The only way to stop people from destroying what God had created was to make us a child of God. Christmas is special to God each year because it reminds Him of all his children.

There is a fun thing about children at their birthdays or Christmas and if you're like me it's not too long before you become like the child. We bought Jude a Thomas the Tank Engine train set one year. After unwrapping, it was less than a minute before I was on the floor building the track and we were pushing the train around.

The bible tells us that God never gave up and we read many stories of the different ways in which God tried to bring us back to him. Our response was always to try and stay holy... pure! WE could never achieve that, no matter how hard we try we couldn't keep clean. Not to brag but I'm not a messy eater until I've got a white t-shirt, shirt or top on. Then I can guarantee at least one thing is going to drop off my fork and no matter how much Daz you use it's not coming out. The same was with the human race, they try to keep God's laws, keep pure because that was the only way.

Any science will tell you if you want to keep anything pure you can only mix it with something that's pure. So, God couldn't mix with us in our state but also, we couldn't make ourselves pure so we could mix with God. So, God sends the most pure thing anyone of us has ever seen, a Baby who grew up to be a man who takes away any stain, making us pure. Taking the task on to himself, turning holiness from something we did to be with God into something God did for us! That it may shine through us! Turning the rules upside down and making us anew freely. Being the Daz! The activated argemone in making us pure instead of something we took off the shelves to make us clean.

My prayer this week is that this Christmas time, I hope we read the signs right and share the right bit of hope for everyone. That Christ made us holy, a free gift for us all.

I hope you all have a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

God Bless

Pete

Sunday 20th December 2020

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.

Opening Prayer (adapted from material provided by Christian Aid for Advent)

Even if we cannot physically gather:
God is with us
Even if Christmas celebrations are different:
God is with us
Even if we might not be able to hug family and friends: God is with us
Even if we cannot sing carols in church buildings:
God is with us
Even if Christmas cheer is harder this year:
God is with us
Emmanuel, God with us, we come before you in worship and praise. We remember that you are ever faithful, eternally loving, and mysteriously present always. Amen

Hymn: Tell out my soul (Singing the Faith 186)
Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egwoqRo9NGE>

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same;
his holy name -- the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926)

Let us pray together:

Emmanuel, God with us,
we rejoice in your faithful and eternally loving nature, as we remember the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, your Son.

Like Mary, we want to rejoice and sing of your love for all creation. From mountain tops and ocean depths, we want all creation to hear the amazing story of your unfathomable generosity and grace.

We give thanks that you cannot be contained, boxed in, or trapped by us for our selfish purposes. You need to be free to be among your people in every situation we face.

To accept your call on our lives is dangerous, risky but above all transformative and life-giving. This morning we rejoice in the knowledge of your love.

Forgive us for the times we have obstructed your message, deliberately or unknowingly.

We hear Christ's gracious word: 'Your sins are forgiven. Amen. Thanks be to God.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament:

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Time to Reflect

It has been a while since I have read Samuel, and it came to me afresh as I read it through for the purposes of preparing this reflection.

God reminds Samuel that he does not need a house, a temple, a place to be contained. God is a free agent, who does not need a building.

Well that's a bit of luck because for many of us, our church buildings have been closed, or for the brief period when we were able to enter the building everything was different.

Instead we have used material such as this to help us worship. Perhaps you have used the Methodist Worship Book, the Prayer Handbook, your hymnbook, television or radio services, or various online platforms.

We can encounter God in a myriad of different ways and in different places, just read through our scriptures and see for yourself.

Mary encountered God's purpose for her through the voice of an angel, a messenger from God. A frightening, awesome, thrilling experience – one that caused her to sing a song that continues to stir the hearts of people today.

Mary became the one who housed the Son of God for a short time in her womb. Her call was to nurture and protect him whilst he was an infant; after that she could no longer contain him, he was free to go where he was needed. Free to challenge, to change, to transform, and to reveal God's love to all he met.

As we prepare for a Christmas that may be unlike any that we have experienced, remember God does not need a building from which to be discovered and worshipped. We can celebrate the birth of Christ in our own homes. Rejoice that God revealed in Christ continues to be made known and calls people to follow and to serve.

Take a moment to think about the times you have encountered God beyond bricks and mortar. Or remember the words of a messenger, who changed your life and helped you see God. Give thanks for those moments and, perhaps like Mary, rejoice from deep within that the love of the one who entered our world as flesh and blood, continues to be experienced.

Take a time to sit quietly.

**GOD
IS WITH
US**

During this season the Methodist Church is proclaiming "God is with us". God is with us is more than a statement.

It's a reminder that God is always with us. We are encouraged to share our story (and other people's stories) of walking with God in this extraordinary year. How might you share how God has been with you this week? Find out more here <https://www.methodist.org.uk/christmas/>

A time of prayer

God of light and love,
you entered our world bringing hope and healing to the nations. The world today needs to hear your message of healing and reconciliation.

We remember the nations of the world where there is enmity, distrust of one another, and bloodshed. May your message of peace be made real.

We remember those who have no home to call their own, those living on the streets or in refugee camps. May your message of justice for all be heeded.

We remember those whose lives have been affected by Covid-19: through the death of loved ones, long-term health difficulties, loss of income. May your message of hope be heard.

We remember those who live in poverty, those who live in fear, those who are anxious, those for whom Christmas means isolation and loneliness. Encourage and equip us to be your messengers, offering words and deeds that bring comfort and relief in the name of Christ. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to Garth Hewitt sing:

Light a Candle in the darkness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0agQyxTVwY>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit'.
(Romans 15: 13)

Original Materials by **Revd Deborah Cornish**

All

Hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCLI No here

The Big Church Sing Christmas Special was broadcast live on the Methodist Church's YouTube channel on Sunday 29 November. Have you seen it yet? If you have access to the internet go to <https://www.youtube.com/methodistchurch>

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph,

of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 God's Covenant with David

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.' Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.'

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will

make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.

Christmas Day 25 December 2020

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. You might like to find a Christmas card with a nativity scene on it. Place it where you can see it during this worship. If you would like to, then light a candle and place it nearby.

Opening Prayer

Here we are, Jesus, on this Christmas Day
 Here you are, Lord Jesus, always ready for us.
 Here I am God, ready for you
 Here you are Emmanuel, always with us
 Grant us your Spirit of joy and peace.

Hymn: StF 202 Hark! The herald angels sing

Read /pray /proclaim the words or join in with a congregation singing it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDPwNPAV6tA>

Hark! The herald-angels sing
 glory to the new-born King,
 peace on earth, and mercy mild,
 God and sinners reconciled.
 Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
 join the triumph of the skies;
 with the angelic host proclaim:
 'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'
 Hark! The herald-angels sing
 glory to the new-born King.

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
 Christ, the everlasting Lord,
 late in time behold him come,
 offspring of a virgin's womb.
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
 Hail, the incarnate Deity!
 Pleased as man with men to dwell,
 Jesus, our Immanuel:

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
 Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all he brings,
 risen with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by,
 born that man no more may die,
 born to raise the sons of earth,
 born to give them second birth:

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

Glory to God in the Highest!
 Glory to our newborn King Jesus!
 Glory to the Spirit of peace and joy!
 Glory to God who loves the world so much that
 he sent His Son to live and work and show God's
 Kingdom here on earth.
 Glory to Emmanuel God here and now, who joins
 me with all the followers of Jesus across the
 globe as we offer our Christmas worship.

Amen

A Christmas Collect

God of light and hope,
 Of stars and surprises:
 Open our eyes to your glory
 and our hearts to your presence,
 that we may respond with joy to the angel song;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

(MWB p526)

Today's Reading from the Old Testament Isaiah 9:2-7

Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 2:(1-7)8-20

Time to Reflect

If you are feeling shut out from normal worship this morning then the shepherds are in the story just for you. Out in the fields they rarely had a chance to "go to worship". They "knew their place" as Ronnie Corbett said repeatedly in that old sketch about the British class system. It is characteristic of Luke that he records the loving

action of God to reach out to the least, the lost, the excluded, the lonely. The angel brings to them Good News. After fear, their response is joy and action, leading to wonder, delight and worship.

How might this apply to you on this most strange of Christmas Days?

"Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."

I wonder what treasured memories of Christmases past you hold in your heart?

What joyous memories can you ponder in the quiet moments of this day?

Take a time to sit quietly, and perhaps listen to this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxclAv-gLp8>

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor on'ry* people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall,
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
Or all of God's angels in heav'n for to sing,
He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor on'ry* people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

*Means "ordinary"

Note:

This carol from the Apalacian mountain region was Collected by John Jacob Niles in Murphy, NC in July 1933 from a young traveling evangelist Annie Morgan. According to Niles, he asked her to sing the song repeatedly until he had memorized it. It was published in his 1934 Songs of the Hill-Folk. Written in a minor key, it's qualities of pensiveness make it one of today's most popular carols.



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encouraged to share our story (and other people's stories) of walking with God in this extraordinary year. How might you share how God has been with you this week? Find out more here <https://www.methodist.org.uk/christmas/>

A time of prayer

God of outreach,
we thank you for coming amongst us in Jesus.
We marvel at your humility, emptying yourself
"of all but love".

We recognize our privilege
and pray for those with no home,
those who have had to travel to foreign lands,
those who flee persecution.
Emmanuel, God with us, be with them.

God of the familiar,
we thank you for the familiar scriptures at
Christmastide.
Speak through them of hope renewed,
of steadfast love,
of faith that flows full and free within and beyond
the familiar carols and services.
May your spirit call out goodness from all who
feel tired and estranged from the familiar today.
Emmanuel, God with us, be with them.

God of the strange,
we pray for all those
who today miss familiar rituals and traditions -
both family and religious.
We pray for all those today who are sad or lonely,
all those who feel cut off from loved ones.
Emmanuel, God with us, be with them.

God of good will,
we pray that these difficult times may call out
goodwill from all who are made in your image.
Bless, we pray,
all those who reach out with Good News,
with practical help, with simple friendship.
Where we become caught up in ourselves,
break in with your message that
"it is in giving out to all that we receive"
Thank you for love and hope made known to us
in our Saviour, Christ Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to the Calypso carol with 2500 voices singing together (StF 216)

or sing a carol that comes to mind.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2ujyrrL9_s

See him lying on a bed of straw;
draughty stable with an open door,
Mary cradling the babe she bore;
the Prince of Glory is his name:
 O now carry me to Bethlehem
 to see the Lord of love again;
 just as poor as was the stable then,
 the Prince of Glory when he came.

Star of silver, sweep across the skies,
show where Jesus in the manger lies;
shepherds, swiftly from your stupor rise
to see the Saviour of the world:

Angels, sing again the song you sang,
sing the story of God's gracious plan;
sing that Beth'lem's little baby can
be the Saviour of us all:

Mine are riches from your poverty,
from your innocence, eternity;
mine, forgiveness by your death for me;
child of sorrow for my joy:

Michael Perry (1942-1996)

A prayer of blessing

May the wisdom of the Wonderful Counselor,
The peace of the Prince of Peace,
The love of the everlasting Father
And the blessing of our mighty God
Rest on us and all those we pray for
This Christmas Day and always. Amen

Original Materials by Phil Challis

All Hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCLI No here

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broadcast live on the Methodist Church's
YouTube channel on Sunday 29 November. Have
you seen it yet? If you have access to the internet
go to

<https://www.youtube.com/methodistchurch>

Isaiah 9:2-7

New Revised Standard Version

² ^[a] The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;

those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

³ You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴ For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

² In those days a decree went out from Emperor
Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This
was the first registration and was taken while
Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own
towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the
town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of
David called Bethlehem, because he was descended
from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be
registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and
who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there,
the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she
gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in
bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because
there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the
fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then
an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory
of the Lord shone around them, and they were
terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be
afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great
joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the
city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,^[a] the
Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child
wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a
manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a
multitude of the heavenly host,^[a] praising God and
saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace, goodwill among people.

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.