

**Sunday 27 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**

Gentle, nurturing God,  
Breathe your still calm voice  
into this time and this space.  
Enfold me in your loving embrace  
as we share in this,  
your holy fellowship.  
In the name of Jesus, born amongst us, I  
pray.  
Amen.

**Hymn: Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus  
(169 StF)**

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words or  
listen to it here:

<https://youtu.be/JEEduWnDGs>

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.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

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

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)*

Let us pray together

God of life and light  
who came and lived amongst us,  
Christ made man, son of Mary,  
who grew from child of hope to Man of  
God  
I praise your holy name.

God of forgiveness and grace,  
I ask your healing forgiveness for all that  
does not honour and serve your love,  
and trust in your unchanging promise:  
I give thanks that you forgive my sins.

God of time and patience  
whose eternal spirit reaches out to us  
and brings time to pause, to wait,  
for your still small voice of calm  
Holy Spirit, our great companion.  
move amongst us  
and reveal your kingdom  
in this time and this place.  
In the name of God, our creator,  
redeemer, and sustainer I pray. Amen.

**Today's Reading from the Old Testament:  
Isaiah 61:10–62:3**

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;

for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,

he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,

and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup> For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

<sup>62:1</sup> For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,  
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a burning torch.

<sup>2</sup> The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the Lord will give.

<sup>3</sup> You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

### **Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 2:22–40**

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to

the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup> 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;

<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.'

<sup>33</sup> And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.

<sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup> When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>The child grew and became

strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

### **Time to Reflect**

*Stop, take a deep breath if you want, pause for a moment. It is barely a moment since Christmas was upon us. This Sunday, between Christmas and Epiphany, gives us space to slow down and to reflect. As we have watched and waited over the weeks of advent, we have recalled God's work over thousands of years as we awaited the arrival of the Son of God amongst us. And now, just two days after Christmas, we mark the months and years of Jesus's infancy. Time has slowed to give us the opportunity to take in the majesty, the hope, the transformation that the birth of one miraculous child brings. We can stand back in awe and wonder!*

*We see that awe and wonder in the accounts of Simeon and Anna. Each has waited a long, long time in the promise of Messiah, and now encounter the infant Jesus. Like us, they have watched and waited in anticipation. As Luke tells us, their hope has not been in vain, but this is not the powerful speaker, or charismatic leader they encounter. The Jesus they see, and in whom they recognise God's presence, is just a child. The long-prophesied acts of the scriptures and those that Anna foretold are yet to come to be. This infant cannot undertake the world-altering ministry that will come... yet...*

*So we find ourselves once again waiting, watching, hoping, praying... We know what is to come. We live in the light and hope of the transformation Jesus's ministry and life, death and resurrection*

*made possible for all of us. That light and hope is powerful as it shows us that even while we are waiting, we can still trust in God's life-giving spirit amongst us. And while we continue to wait with anticipation we can, like Simeon, take a moment to pause and give thanks for God amongst us here and now.*

Take a time to sit quietly



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**

Enduring, eternal God, of Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Joseph, who left all behind them to follow you. We ask for your strength and guidance to follow in their footsteps.

Powerful, transforming God, of Isaiah and Ezekiel, Micah and Amos, who spoke of you in their time and their place, we ask for your powerful words and actions in places of need today.

Creating, unsettling God, of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for your arrival, help us to continue to prepare your way and equip us in your service.

Parenting, nurturing, God. of Mary and Joseph,

we think of our families,  
those we choose and those chosen for us,  
We call them to mind:  
bring us into your warm embrace  
so that no matter how near or far  
we know your love reaches out to us all.

Patient, hope-filled God, of Simeon and Anna  
we give thanks for those whose testimony,  
and fellowship to you crosses generations.  
We pray for your church,  
trusting that as we watch and wait,  
work and pray,  
we can bear witness to  
the love of God,  
the light of Christ  
and the wisdom of the Spirit.  
Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn:** *Sing/Read/Pray/Reflect on the words to Mary and Joseph Came to the Temple (229 StF)*  
or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/mary-and-joseph-came-to-the-temple-stf-229/>

Mary and Joseph  
came to the Temple,  
brought the boy Jesus,  
offered him there.  
People were waiting  
wanting to greet him,  
long had they sought him,  
solace for care.

Anna had prayed there,  
widowed, long waiting;  
worshipping God by  
day and by night.  
Now she is praising,

filled with elation;  
here is God's promise,  
Christ is her light.

Simeon sings now  
God offers blessing,  
brilliantly gilding  
dawn of his day;  
light in the darkness,  
never extinguished,  
light of all nations,  
light up our way.

*Andrew Pratt (b. 1948)*

### **A prayer of blessing**

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in  
peace:  
your word has been fulfilled.  
My own eyes have seen the salvation  
which you prepared in the sight of every  
people;  
A light to reveal you to the nations  
and the glory of your people Israel.  
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to  
the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now and shall  
be for ever. Amen.

*From Common Worship)*

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Merrygold

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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>