

### Worship at Home – Christmas Day

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people across the Methodist Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you.

#### The gift that is Christmas

Christmas Day is here! And with it comes the celebration of the birth of Jesus who was born a long time ago in Bethlehem. The waiting through Advent is over and in our worship at home today we join in this celebration of Christmas as we give thanks for God's greatest gift of love for the world in Jesus.

For a child has been born for us,  
a Son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

#### Hymn: O come all ye faithful – StF212

[O come, all ye faithful \(StF 212\)  
\(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)

O come, all ye faithful,  
joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
come and behold him,  
born the King of angels:  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the  
Lord!

True God of true God,

Light of Light eternal,  
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;  
Son of the Father,  
begotten, not created:

See how the shepherds,  
summoned to his cradle,  
leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;  
we too will thither  
bend our joyful footsteps:

Lo, star-led chieftains,  
Magi, Christ adoring,  
offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
we to the Christ-child  
bring our hearts' oblations:

Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:  
'Glory to God  
in the highest:'

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to thee be glory given:  
Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing:

*Latin, 18th century, possibly by  
John Francis Wade (c. 1711-1786)  
and others*

*\* The final verse should be sung only on  
Christmas Day.*

### **Let us pray together**

Creator God, we give you thanks for the gift of Christmas. As we hear once again the Christmas story we join with the shepherds and angels and wise men who find a new hope in a baby born in Bethlehem. May we too go to that place, first seen long ago and celebrated today, a place where a new baby was born who was to show your way and share your love. We give thanks for your love that is at the heart of this season and for your hope which is shown in Jesus. As we give thanks for the Christ child may we continue to explore what it means for you to come into our world as you share our humanity. May we share the hope of this season today and throughout our lives. We rejoice in your coming to us in Jesus and as we celebrate his birth may we always be reminded of your love which is at the heart of Christmas. We ask this our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

### **Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 2 v 8 – 20**

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying

in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favours!' 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.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

### **Time to Reflect**

The announcement of the birth of a baby is something deeply significant to parents, to their families and friends and to wider society. Today the birth of a baby is often announced on social media but news of Jesus birth was different, being heralded by a group of angels and by a new star in the sky!

The first people to hear about the birth of Jesus were a group of shepherds who saw angels swooping above them and heard them singing overhead. This group of ordinary people would have been amazed and frightened at the same time, but the angels said to them, 'Do not be afraid', for the angels knew that the love of God was around them and always would be. Once the angels had left them and the last notes

of their song of peace and hope had faded, the shepherds were left reeling at their antics and wondered why the angels had appeared to *them* and what they should do next, should they stay where they were or go to Bethlehem? The choice that they made was to change their lives for ever. They said, 'Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place that the Lord has told us about'. That choice led them to the heart of Christmas. When they reached the place where the baby was, they understood more clearly the angel's message. At the heart of God's hope for the world is a baby, a baby who was to transform our relationship with God and was ultimately to bring a deeper hope and richer blessing to all people. But all that was to come. Now the shepherds were there, with Mary and Joseph, looking at the baby. The shepherds would never be the same again and as they went back to their sheep and carried on with their work their encounter with Jesus remained with them. They had found the love of God and it changed their lives, which is what Christmas is all about.

We may not hear the song of the angels today in the way that the shepherds did, but we still respond to their song and seek to live out their message of hope and peace for our world. As we read Luke's account of the incarnation, we see that the shepherds had been told about God's greatest gift, God's greatest treasure. They went to Bethlehem to see and found out what Christmas is all about as they went to the stable and saw the new baby placed in a manger. Let us go there too and see what God has done and what God is doing.

Christmas today is multi layered, it is a celebration with food and presents, it is a

time in the mid-winter when we share the light of hope, when we remember families and friends and we gain the realisation of God coming among us. As the carol tells us, 'Love came down at Christmas' and the great thing is that that love has never left us. Christmas reminds us of God's involvement with the world as Jesus comes as light in our darkness and hope in our fears. On this Christmas day as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may the light of the Christ child continue to shine and may the peace, hope and love of this season continue to be celebrated among us and throughout our world.

Take a time to sit quietly

### **A time of prayer**

Creator God, in the birth of your Son you bring your love into the heart of the world. In this Christmas season we pray for our families and friends, for our communities and our world as we celebrate the love that has come amongst us in the Christ child.

On this Christmas day we remember our families and friends and we give thanks for them. We give thanks that God has come into the life of the world, and we pray that we may work for and find the peace that the angels sang about. On this Christmas day we give thanks for the gift of Jesus and the light that shines in our darkness. May the love and peace of Christ be with us.

We pray for those who are ill this day in body, mind or spirit and we pray for those who look after them.

We pray for those who mourn asking that the love of God will enfold them and that they may know God's peace.

We remember those who have died. We give thanks for times shared together and remember the depth of God's love for us all both now and in eternity.

In a moment of silence we bring our prayers this day.

May the love, hope and peace of Christ be with us and all for whom we pray today.  
Amen

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

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn: Listen to Love came down at Christmas – StF210** or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind  
<https://youtu.be/ssKkP78kFiM>

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, Love divine;  
worship we our Jesus:  
but wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,  
love be yours and love be mine,  
love to God and all the world,  
love for plea and gift and sign.

*Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894)*

### **A prayer of blessing**

May the love of God, the hope of the Christ child and the presence of the Holy Spirit be with us all this Christmas season.

To us, to our world and to all whom we remember especially this day, may God

bless us and give us his peace, now and always.

Amen

Original Materials by **Rev Philp Wagstaff**  
**Hastings Bexhill and Rye Circuit**

All

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We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team.

For more worship resources see

[The Bible \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)

[Singing the Faith Plus \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)