

Worship at Home – Sunday 5 December 2021

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.

Opening Prayer

Call to worship - Responsive

Leader: Now is the time to get ready:

All: Let us prepare the way of the Lord!

Leader: Now is the time to be changed:

All: Let us repent and seek forgiveness.

Leader: Now is the time to welcome God into our midst:

All: Let us worship God in humble expectation.

LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT
CANDLE

Hymn: Come, thou long-expected Jesus
(Singing the Faith 169)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or
listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ykTZvZPz48&feature=youtu.be>

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or
listen to it here

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

Lord Jesus, Light of the World, the prophets said you would bring peace and save your people from trouble. Give peace in our hearts in this advent season. We ask that as we wait for you to come again, you would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your peace with each other. We ask it in the name that is above all names, the name of Jesus Christ who is the reason for the season.

Prayers of confession

We have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your
love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse
us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us
and restore us to the joy of your
salvation,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

cf Psalm 51

Readings: Malachi 3: 1- 4; Luke 3: 1- 6

3 “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.
2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. **3** He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.

Gospel reading

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— **2** during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God

came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3** He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **4** As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:
“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.
5 Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.
6 And all people will see God’s salvation.’

Time to Reflect

Today, as we step into this second Sunday of Advent, we are invited even more to prepare our hearts and minds for yet another Christ-mas, another coming of the Christ-child. And I have rarely met anyone who does not in some way want to be in on the expectant, hopeful feeling of this season. All around us, in the coming weeks, and certainly when Christians gather to worship and pray, people will be given the opportunity to celebrate the Holy birth of “God with us.” This is the business of preparation, or as our Gospel lesson puts it, it is a time of “Making Straight the Way.” A time of great preparation. With Xmas with us, decorations will be everywhere, This is all preparation.

Today's Gospel lesson reveals the work of the ultimate preparer. John the Baptist, whose ministry, some scholars tell us, lasted only about a few months. John comes to us and tells us to prepare the way. But for thirty years,

John's life had been leading up to this short period of ninety days during which he would build a path for the Saviour of the world.

The Scripture tells us that the forerunner John the Baptist did this to call on his hearers for "repentance." He modeled that in his own life by saying he was not even worthy to carry the sandals of the One Who was to come. John knew, despite some rather incredible popularity in his own right, that for God to work in his life and to continue His work on earth, the Baptizer had to step aside and allow Christ to begin for another preparation, the preparation for His kingdom.

If we are really to be part of the Advent season, I think we have to turn to John as a model. How do we "make the path straight" for the return of our Lord and in our day to day lives? Certainly there are many things, but let me briefly point to two:

The first is that we must utterly and wholeheartedly offer our lives to God in Christ. John the Baptist said that he must decrease so that Christ might increase. We are to do the same. We are consciously to offer ourselves to a deepening commitment and have a personal relationship to Jesus if we are to truly be children of the Light named Christ.

The second is that as John set his life on a path of making straight the way for others, we are called to do the same. Jesus tells us time and time again, that the greatest of all commandments...of all laws, is the law of love the law of concern for those

around us. We, you and I, have an obligation to all those around us to take the skills, talents, gifts and resources we have and make straight the path for others to reach the Kingdom, by pointing the way as did John to Jesus.

This is crucial that each of us give of ourselves beyond joining in worship week after week. Not just by our prayers and words. We are called to - in all things - word and deed, prayer and action, by what we say and do, share the Christ story and thereby draw others into our journey to the end of the path.

As Advent continues, let us turn from those things, those paths that are not of God, open our hearts and our souls and say with all that we are, "Emmanuel, God with us." Amen.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

We pray...

For those lost in the desert.

May they find the straight path.

For those down trodden.

May they be lifted up.

For those in dry places.

May they find you as the living water.

For those heart broken.

May they find peace in Jesus.

For those seeking healing.

May they be healed.

For those seeking consolation.

May they be comforted.

For those waiting to be heard.
May they find justice in you.

Alan Hinton

For those waiting for transformation.
May there be sprouts of change.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to 'The prophets' voice comes down the years' (Singing the Faith 162) [The prophets' voice comes down the years \(StF 162\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](#) or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

The prophets' voice comes down the years
to teach and to inspire,
to show the nature of our God
in words and deeds of fire;
not to disclose some rigid plan
that God has set in stone,
but to renew the promises
the saints have always known.

The prophets' voice speaks of the past --
the actions that reveal
the way God used the people then
this broken world to heal;
and then translates the things gone by
in ways that we find new
so we can judge the world we know
by standards ever true.

The prophets' voice holds up a glass
in which to see our day;
events which span the globe around
and things we do and say.
It calls us to repent and turn
from things that tear life down,
to choose the path that Jesus chose
and share his work and crown.

A prayer of blessing

And now may the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us and all we love now, tomorrow and the days to come. Amen.

Original Materials by **Peggy Kabonde**

All

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Local Churches CCCLi 363610

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 \(methodist.org.uk\)](#)

[Singing the Faith Plus \(methodist.org.uk\)](#)