



## Christmas Day

### PREPARATION

#### Welcome and Prayer

Leader     The glory of the Lord has been revealed  
All           **and all flesh shall see it together.**

Leader     Jesus Christ is the light of the world:  
All           **a light no darkness can quench.**

Leader     The shepherds kept watch by night,  
All           **and your glory shone round about them.**

Leader     The darkness is not dark to you,  
All           **the night is as bright as the day.**

Leader     Let your light scatter the darkness  
All           **and fill your Church with your glory.**

#### Hymn        **Come and join the celebration**

*Come and join the celebration –  
it's a very special day;  
come and share our jubilation –  
there's a new king born today!*



See the shepherds hurry down to Bethlehem,  
gaze in wonder at the Son of God who lies before them:  
*Come and join . . .*

Wise men journey, led to worship by a star,  
kneel in homage, bringing precious gifts from lands afar, so  
*Come and join . . .*

'God is with us!' – round the world the message bring;  
he is with us – 'Welcome!' all the bells on earth are pealing:  
*Come and join . . .*

Words and music by Valerie Collison  
Music arranged by David Peacock

#### Lighting of the Advent Wreath – *Light a candle in your home*

Leader     God our Father, today the Saviour is born and  
those who live in darkness is seeing a great  
light. Help us, who greet the birth of Christ with  
joy, to live in the light of your Son and to share



the good news of your love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who has come into the world. **Amen.**

**All**     **Lord Jesus, Light of light, you have come among us. Help us who live by your light to shine as lights in your world. Glory to God in the highest. Amen.**

### Christmas Greetings from the church family

#### Confession

Leader     The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings.  
Let us come to the light of Christ,  
confessing our sins in penitence and faith

God our Father, you sent your Son full of grace and truth:  
forgive our failure to receive him.

Lord, have mercy

**All**     **Lord have mercy**

Leader     Jesus our Saviour, you were born in poverty and laid in a manger: forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.

Christ have mercy

**All**     **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader     Spirit of love, your servant Mary responded joyfully to your call:  
forgive the hardness of our hearts.

Lord, have mercy

**All**     **Lord have mercy**

#### Absolution

Leader     May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw you to himself,  
that you may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh,  
and be cleansed from all your sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All**     **Amen.**

#### Collect (prayer on this day)

Leader     Lord Jesus Christ,  
your birth at Bethlehem  
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:  
accept our heartfelt praise  
as we worship you,  
our Saviour and our eternal God.

**All**     **Amen**

## Opening activity ~ Outside and inside



### Song      **Away in a manger**

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down His  
sweet head;  
the stars in the bright sky looked  
down where He lay;  
the little Lord Jesus asleep in the  
hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby  
awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus, no crying He  
makes:

I love You, Lord Jesus! look down  
from the sky  
and stay by my side until morning  
is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask You to  
stay  
close by me for ever and love me, I  
pray;  
bless all the dear children in Your  
tender care,  
and fit us for heaven to live with  
You there.

### Bible readings

*Isaiah 9:2-7 ~ Lynda Salmond, All Souls'*

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

<sup>3</sup>You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

<sup>5</sup>Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

*Luke 2:1-20 ~ Penguin Animation*

<sup>1</sup>In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup>(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup>And everyone went to his own town to register.

<sup>4</sup>So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house

and line of David. <sup>5</sup>He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup>and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

<sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup>Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

<sup>16</sup>So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

### Sermon Rachel Johnson

Once upon a time there was a young woman called Maria, and one day Maria found out something amazing – she was going to have a baby! She rushed to tell her husband Joe, her family and her neighbours. Everyone was delighted! Joe immediately began making plans for a nursery for the new baby. Her mum and dad started phoning all their friends to pass on the exciting news that they were going to become grandparents and the neighbours brought round casseroles to keep Maria well-rested and well fed. Maria hardly got any morning sickness and thoroughly enjoyed her antenatal classes with the NCT (other providers are available). Her regular check ups showed that all was going well and that she was expecting a little boy. As Maria got bigger and wearier her neighbours stepped in to do the cleaning and Joe helped her relax by massaging her shoulders and helping her practise her breathing. When the great day finally came Maria and Joe drove to their nearest birthing centre where they were ushered into a sparkling room with a comfy bed, birthing pool, en-suite bathroom and their own dedicated midwife to help Maria through labour. Everything

went as smoothly as could be and just a few short hours later Maria and Joe were the proud parents of a bouncing baby boy. Maria felt full of energy and went home that night to enjoy family life with Joe and baby Joshua. Her friends and family brought helpful gifts like baby gowns and muslins and chocolate and more casseroles, and went away again without insisting on seeing the new mum and baby, so Maria didn't have to worry about looking presentable or disturbing the baby. All in all it was the perfect way to welcome baby Joshua into the world.

Here's another story. Once upon a time there was a young woman called Mary, and one day Mary found out something amazing and terrifying – she was going to have a baby. Her fiancé Joseph wasn't happy because he knew he wasn't the dad. Her mum and dad were furious – a pregnant unmarried daughter was a disgrace on the whole family. The neighbours gossiped in the marketplace. Some of them called her names. The local rabbi started looking up the regulations on stoning. Between morning sickness and heartburn and nasty looks pregnancy wasn't a pleasant time for Mary. So it was a relief when Joseph announced that he was taking her to Bethlehem for the census. Taking some of her shame on himself. But it was a difficult journey – Mary's legs were swollen and she felt faint. She didn't know if it was worse to keep putting one foot in front of the other or endure the bumpiness of a donkey ride. And Bethlehem was so crowded – visitors looking for lodgings, soldiers loitering on every street corner, cripples and beggars huddled in the gutters, visible reminders that disease, poverty and oppression stalked this town. It felt like the census had thrown the whole world into turmoil. And Mary was uncomfortably aware that she was about to face one of the most dangerous moments in a woman's life – childbirth. The only space Joseph could find for Mary to rest was amongst the animals. The straw was scratchy, the light was dim, the air was – well, let's just say it wasn't fresh. Hot water and towels and cheery midwives weren't in evidence either. But babies come when they want to come. And soon the noise and smell and fear were drowned out by pain. Until baby Jesus finally arrived and the temporary peace was broken by a succession of visitors, from unwashed shepherds to foreign kings, trailing danger in their wake. And even as Mary drank in the sight of her son's beautiful face, her beautiful, vulnerable son, cherished and feared and despised, her heart was filled with terror at what Herod's soldiers might do to him. Would baby Jesus ever have somewhere safe to lie his head?

Which story would you choose to be part of?

Which story did God choose to be part of?

We love to plan the perfect Christmas, don't we? Perhaps yours includes a pantomime visit or a carol service, a satsuma and a tube of smarties in

your stocking, a big family meal followed by presents round the Christmas tree, a snowy walk and the Doctor Who Christmas Special. But this year we don't have that perfect Christmas or even an average Christmas. This Christmas is coloured by grief and fear and gaping holes where our plans have been ripped to shreds. Disease is oppressing us. For many of us money is tight and loved ones are absent and hope is racing away. It's not the Christmas we would have chosen. But perhaps this is the Christmas that lets us read those familiar nativity stories with fresh eyes.

The first Christmas was marked by the turmoil of the census, the fear of poverty and disease, the tragedy of the slaughter of the innocents. Yet this was the Christmas God chose to enter into the messiness of human existence by becoming human. He didn't wait for Mary to be safely married or for maternal mortality rates to go down or for the Romans to get out of Israel or for Herod to learn compassion. God chose to enter into the suffering and darkness of everyday life and infuse it with new hope. So the shepherds went away rejoicing, the wise men bowed down in awe and wonder, the angels sang 'glory to God', and Mary and Joseph treasured up everything they saw and heard.

We share in their joy and wonder because God is still present in our story today, bringing comfort and bringing hope. God, who chose to be born in Bethlehem, still chooses to be with us today. So this is a day to celebrate because even our present darkness can't overcome the light of Emmanuel, God with us.

Our 2020 Christmas story is missing a lot but it's not missing the most important thing of all - Christ.

### Hymn      **Unto us a boy is born**

Unto us a boy is born!  
King of all creation,  
came He to a world forlorn,  
the Lord of every nation,  
the Lord of every nation.

Cradled in a stall was He  
with sleepy cows and asses;  
but the very beasts could see  
that He all men surpasses,  
that He all men surpasses.

Herod then with fear was filled:  
'A Prince,' he said, 'in Jewry!'  
All the little boys he killed

at Bethlehem in his fury,  
at Bethlehem in his fury.

Now may Mary's Son, who came  
so long ago to love us,  
lead us all with hearts aflame  
unto the joys above us,  
unto the joys above us.

Alpha and Omega He!  
Let the organ thunder,  
while the choir with peals of glee  
doth rend the air asunder,  
doth rend the air asunder!

Words tr. by Percy Dearmer  
Music arranged by Geoffrey Shaw



## Creed

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.  
**All**      **Though he was divine, he did not cling to equality with God,  
but made himself nothing.  
Taking the form of a slave,  
he was born in human likeness.  
He humbled himself and was obedient to death,  
even the death of the cross.  
Therefore God has raised him on high,  
and given him the name above every name:  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.**

## Prayers ~ Rev Mick Moorse, St Mark's

Today we celebrate one of the most outstanding events in the History of the planet. The creator of the universe becoming a small vulnerable baby. So we begin with a prayer of praise for Christmas.



A Prayer of praise for Christmas.

Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men; for unto us is born this day a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. We praise you, we bless you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you, for the greatest of your mercies, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

And now a Christmas Day prayer

O God our heavenly Father, as we remember the birth of Jesus, We welcome Him with gladness as Saviour and pray that there will be room for Him in our hearts, our lives, and our homes today especially but also always. We ask this for His sake. Amen

A verse from the Bible 2 Corinthians 9:15

*"Thanks be to God for His precious and indescribable gift"*

The Bible contains a number of prayers. Examples for us to follow. One in the Old Testament and one in the new stand out for me. Both of them present a problem before God or Jesus. They don't ask for an answer, but the presumption is that the problem will be dealt with. For example King Hezekiah received a threatening letter, from the Babylonian leader, and poor Hezekiah didn't know what to do. So he went to the temple, spread the letter out, and in effect saying this is my problem God, now it's over to you. He also reminded himself of the greatness of the God who could deal with his problem.

Which is what we can do now with some verses from Psalms

*O Lord our Lord*

*How majestic is your name in all the earth*

*When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers I am amazed*

*For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised*

*For the Lord made the Heavens*

*Splendour and majesty are before Him*

*Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.*

Another example happened at a wedding. Jesus' mother Mary came to Him with a problem, she left it with Him knowing that He would do something about it. Today we face many problems, so many. Many of them associated with the Pandemic. Our situation may be summed up in one word, uncertainty. Many face an uncertain future, facing unemployment, this is particularly so for the young people. Then there are those whose businesses are on the verge of going bust or have gone bust already. And there are those who work, day by day dealing with the virus. We are told that the NHS faces a very difficult winter. Also there is the possibility of more restrictions after Christmas in order to combat the rising infection rate. There are of course many watching loved ones suffering or grieving the loss of a loved one. Whilst we give thanks for the production of vaccines in record breaking time the vaccination programme itself presents an enormous problem. Of course, there are those who face personal problems, we remember Peter and Eileen Bliss, Olive Park, Lynda Kirk, Patrick Chapman and Joy Storkey and there are many, many, others some of them known to us personally. On top of all this uncertainty we have the uncertainty of Brexit.

So here and now we lay all these problems and perhaps we can think of many more before God and just pray one word – Help.

O Lord as we face this time with so many problems, so much uncertainty, we pray that you will see us through as individuals and as a nation.

Also we ask you to keep reminding us that those that belong to God, to Jesus will be kept by Him no matter what happens.

Lord hear our prayer – And let our cry come to you

*Kept by the power of God*

*Kept by the power of God*

*Day by day – come what may*

*Kept by the power of God*

So as we face the coming weeks two words to keep uppermost in our prayers, Help and Kept.



## The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus  
And the love of God  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with us and those we love  
Now and Always.

We draw our prayers to a close with the words our Saviour taught us

## The Lord's Prayer

**All    Our Father in heaven,  
         hallowed be your name,  
         your Kingdom come, your will be done,  
         on earth as in heaven.  
         Give us today our daily bread.  
         Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
         Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
         For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
         now and for ever. Amen**

## Church family carol

## **O come all ye faithful**

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,  
He, who abhors not the virgin's  
womb;  
Son of the Father,  
begotten not created:

*O come, let us adore Him . . .*

Sing choirs angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing all ye citizens of heaven  
above,  
'Glory to God,  
glory in the highest':  
*O come, let us adore Him . . .*

Yes, Lord, we greet You,  
born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to You be glory given!  
Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing:  
*O come, let us adore Him . . .*

Words tr. by Frederick Oakley  
Music by John Francis Wade

This time @Christmas – Jonathan and Sarah Thomas

Notices    (See Notes & News)

## Hymn     **Hark the herald angels sing**

Hark! the herald-angels sing,  
'Glory to the new-born King!  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.'

Joyful, all you 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 man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel.

*Hark! the herald-angels sing,  
'Glory to the new-born King!'*

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.

*Hark! the herald-angels sing,  
'Glory to the new-born King!'*

Words by Charles Wesley  
Music by Felix Mendelssohn

## Blessing

Leader     May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ-child  
be yours this Christmas;  
and the blessing ...

Leader     Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.  
**All**         **In the name of Christ. Amen.**



# You have been worshipping with





