

Worship at Home – Third Sunday in Advent – 12 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

Eternal God, source of all blessing, help us to worship you with all our heart and mind and strength; for you alone are God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen.** (MWB p28)

Many churches light candles in Advent. If you are in a place where it is safe to do so, you may like to light 3 candles or tea lights now.

[Advent candles tell their story](#)

StF165 *Advent 1*

Advent candles tell their story
as we watch and pray,
longing for the Day of Glory,
'Come, Lord, soon,' we say.
Pain and sorrow, tears and sadness
changed for gladness on that day.

Advent 2

Prophet voices loudly crying,
making pathways clear,
glimpsing glory, self-denying,
calling all to hear.
Through their message —

challenged, shaken —
hearts awaken: God is near!

Advent 3

John the Baptist, by his preaching
and by water poured,
brought to those who heard his teaching
news of hope restored:
'Keep your vision strong and steady,
and be ready for the Lord.'

by ©Mark Earey (b. 1965)

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Tune: Angel Voices HP484, RS 405, StF165

Let us pray together:

God of all glory, you brought the universe into existence, and raised up witnesses to your greatness and love. We praise and adore you. Grant that by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit we may worship and serve you,
and praise your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (MWB p117)

Epistle: [Galatians chapter 3, verses 26-29.](#)

Gospel: [Matthew chapter 1, verses 1-17.](#)

Time to Reflect:

We don't often read this list of the ancestors of Jesus – *are you surprised?!*

-- but remember Matthew was originally writing 2000 years ago for people with a Jewish background.

If you compare this list with that in the books of Chronicles, Matthew has left a few out to make the numbers add up to 14 x 3!

The list includes some women:

Tamar's child was fathered by her father-in-law and Rahab was a prostitute – *do these sound like your usual 'pillars of the chapel'?* – Ruth was a foreigner; Bathsheba was "the wife of Uriah" whom David had killed so he could take her as his wife; and Mary, Jesus's mother. But in those days...

Jewish thought did not allow women to prove a pedigree – it was the father that counted. Nor did they allow foreigners. You had to be 'pure' Jewish blood.

So Matthew is saying, in this new religion of Christianity: women matter, foreigners matter, people on the fringes of society matter. And there's room for saint and sinner in the new life of Jesus. Paul agrees. Re-read our epistle.

So this rather boring list of names at the start of Matthew's gospel is telling those who first read it, and is telling us too, that the coming of Jesus brings changes in thinking; it brings changes in our ways of living; and is still bringing change, as he leads us on.

Take a time to sit quietly

Intercessions

Let us pray for God's family throughout the world; for all who bear responsibility among his people; for all church leaders (particularly those feeling under exceptional pressure); and for all who are sharing in this act of worship, wherever they may be.

Let us pray for the peace of the world; for the rulers of all the nations; for government in accordance with God's holy will; and for a just and proper use of the natural resources of the world.

Let us pray for the concerns and activities of the churches nearby, and for the people around us, and for ourselves, our families, friends and neighbours.

Let us pray for all in sorrow, need, anxiety or sickness; for the neglected, the persecuted and the lonely, and for those in any need or trouble.

Let us praise God for those in every generation in whom Christ has been honoured, and pray that we also, inspired by their example, may have grace to glorify Christ.

Almighty God, to whom our needs are known before we ask, help us to ask only what accords with your will; and those good things which we dare not ask, or in our blindness cannot ask, grant us for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(MSB

pB28 alt.)

The Lord's Prayer *Our Father....*

Hymn: [Into the darkness of this world](#)

StF173 (Also SoF821)

Into the darkness of this world,
into the shadows of the night;
into this loveless place you came,
lightened our burdens, eased our pain,
and made these hearts your home.
Into the darkness once again --
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Come with your love
to make us whole,
come with your light to lead us on,
driving the darkness far from our souls:
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Into the longing of our souls,
into these heavy hearts of stone,
shine on us now your piercing light,
order our lives and souls aright,
by grace and love unknown,
until in you our hearts unite --
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Come with your love
to make us whole,
come with your light to lead us on,
driving the darkness far from our souls:
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

O Holy Child, Emmanuel,
hope of the ages, God with us,
visit again this broken place,
till all the earth declares your praise
and your great mercies own.
Now let your love be born in us,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Come in your glory,
take your place,
Jesus, the Name above all names,
we long to see you face to face,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Maggi Dawn (b. 1959)

or if you prefer a traditional Advent hymn

StF172 (also HP237) [Hills of the north rejoice](#)

Hills of the north, rejoice,
river and mountain-spring,
hark to the advent voice;
valley and lowland, sing.
Christ comes in righteousness and love,
he brings salvation from above.

Isles of the southern seas,
sing to the listening earth;
carry on every breeze
hope of a world's new birth:
in Christ shall all be made anew;
his word is sure, his promise true.

Lands of the east, arise!
He is your brightest morn;
greet him with joyous eyes,
let praise his path adorn:

your seers have longed to know their Lord;
to you he comes, the final Word.

Shores of the utmost west,
lands of the setting sun,
welcome the heavenly guest
in whom the dawn has come:
he brings a never-ending light,
who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

Shout, as you journey on;
songs be in every mouth!
Lo, from the north they come,
from east and west and south:
in Jesus all shall find their rest,
in him the universe be blest.

Charles Ernest Oakley (1832-1865) and Editors of English Praise.

A prayer of blessing

Go out into the world and prepare a way for the Lord. Speak and act in loving ways to show he is with us. God bless you and guide you in the way of all truth and justice.

And go in peace.

If you lit candles, blow them out now!

MSB = Methodist Service Book, MPH 1975.

MWB = Methodist Worship Book, MPH 1999.

The blessing is from Companion to the Lectionary volume 6 p141 Epworth Press 1996.

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.