

Worship at Home - Sunday 26th 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.

An opening word

The long wait is over, and our days of preparation are at an end. Night has given way to day, and darkness has been overcome by light. "For unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given." We are a blessed people, for who would have thought that love itself could take up our flesh?

A prayer of adoration

As shepherds drew near with wonder and adoration,
As wise men bowed low with gifts and hope,
so, we bow before you now
with prayers of thanksgiving and gladness of heart. Amen

Hymn: [Good Christian Men Rejoice/God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen with Lyrics - YouTube](#)

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

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart, and soul, and voice!
Give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born today!
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart, and soul, and voice!
Now ye hear of endless bliss,
Jesus Christ was born for this;

He hath oped the heavenly door,
and all are blest for evermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart, and soul, and voice!
Now ye need not fear the grave;
Jesus Christ was born to save,
Calls you one and calls you all,
to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

Scripture lesson John 1:14-18

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and^[a] is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

A meditation

Communication is a sensitive business. It's easy to get it wrong. So, with a view to the Sunday morning sermon, we preachers struggle to get it right. Every week, after a process of preparation

that can include fussing, fretting, fuming, and hair-pulling, we stand at the pulpit and try to speak the word of God. We quote scripture, tell stories, and use poetry. We gesticulate with our hands, stand on our tiptoes, and ask the Holy Spirit for help all in an effort to communicate the mystery and magnificence of the gospel.

Talking though may not always be the best way to communicate. Sometimes, the touch of a hand, or a certain action will communicate a given message far better than a lot of words. Sometimes the best way to communicate a message is to wrap it up in a person, or for us ourselves, to be the message that we are trying to communicate. Showing up at the bedside of a hospitalized friend or spending valued time with my children may speak louder than words.

At Christmas time we remember that love once communicated itself in a special way, not with words but through the birth of a baby. Who would have guessed it? Not with signs of power or in the clothing of royalty but in a baby, born in poverty, did the love God make such a bold and striking impression. Love itself, as it were, showed up in a very odd, very vulnerable, very wonderful form. Could it be that vulnerability and “showing up” are at the heart of what love is, and that all the words in the world are a poor substitute? It is one thing to talk about it or to tell others how they should do it, but it is quite another to make oneself vulnerable and to show up with love in places of need. Could it be that this was the idea that God had in mind when He showed up on that first Christmas morning?

In any case, there is a great need for this love, and wherever it is truly experienced, it is inclined to make quite an impression. Angels sing about it, shepherds rush to see it, and wise-men travel long distances to offer up their gifts of allegiance to it.

As for me, and other preachers like me, come Sunday morning, I will still be using words, standing on my tip toes, gesticulating with my hands, and asking the Holy Spirit for help, because of course, it is also good to talk about it.

Hymn [StF 222 Who would think that what was needed with lyrics for congregations - YouTube](#)

Who would think that what was needed,
to transform and save the earth,
might not be a plan or army,
proud in purpose proved in worth?
Who would think despite derision,
that a child might lead the way?
God surprises earth with heaven
coming here on Christmas day.

Shepherd watch and wise men wonder,
monarchs scorn and angels sing,
such a place as none would reckon,
hosts a holy helpless thing.

Stable beasts and by-passed strangers, watch
a baby laid in hay:
God surprises earth with heaven
coming here on Christmas day.

Centuries of skill and science,
span the past from which we move,
yet experience questions whether,
with such progress we improve.
While the human lot we ponder,
lest our hopes and humour fray,
God surprises earth with heaven
coming here on Christmas day.

A prayer of blessing

We thank you, Lord, for the joys of this season:
for the giving and receiving;

for the reunion with family and friends;
and most especially for the truth that your love communicates itself not just with words but in the flesh of your presence and the deeds of your love.

We thank you too for the challenge of Christmas; for your coming in poverty which challenges the affluence we take for granted; for your self-giving which puts in perspective all our charity.

We pray for those who in this season are made more aware of their own loneliness: for those who received no presents, or very few; for those who have no families, or whose families are far away.

We pray for those who are bereaved and missing people who are no longer with them. Christ be with them and grant them consolation.

We pray for world leaders as they continue to make hard decisions in the face of the enormous challenges of Covid 19, the climate crisis, and the economic divide between the rich and the poor. Give them wisdom, we pray, and courage them to do the right thing.

Finally, we pray for ourselves that we might share your love more boldly and do your deeds more joyfully in the flesh.

For ask all of this in Jesus' name, Amen

The Blessing

May the God who came to be fully present in Christ help us to be fully present ourselves. And may He bless us with a powerful faith that is eager to show itself in actions. Amen

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 \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)

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