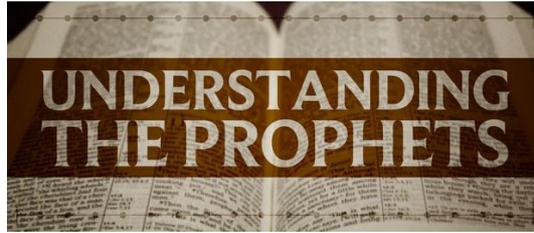




# The **Methodist** Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020



This short act of worship, based on the service which would have been held at Church today, has been prepared for you by Rev John Wiseman, to use at home. If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

I have included some links to allow you to access versions of the hymns / songs / music via YouTube

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent...I encourage you to light a candle at the start of this act of worship as we sing / say / pray the first 2 verses of our advent hymn to the tune, "Oh worship the King, all glorious above"**

The candle of hope we light in this hour  
Proclaims that the Lord is coming in power.  
We wait for a future, now hidden from view,  
When Christ in his glory will make all things  
new.

The candle of peace shines bright with God's  
plan;  
The wolf will lie down and dwell with the lamb.  
Our guns and our weapons, our hatred and  
war,  
Will give way to gardens that heal and restore.  
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[www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6HNI5TRdHk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6HNI5TRdHk)

**Pause for a few moments to reflect as you set out on your Advent journey so far....**

### **Opening prayer**

The Lord is here and we will praise him  
The Lord is here and we will worship him  
The Lord is here and we will trust him  
The Lord is here and we will honour him  
And he has called us here to give him all the  
glory  
His name is almighty and he is the Lord  
His name is creator and he makes all things  
new

His name is sustainer and he holds us in the  
palm of his hand  
His name is saviour and he died in our place  
His name is forgiveness and he can be trusted  
to heal and bless his name is Holy and we  
have come to worship  
His name means he is worthy to receive all we  
have and all we are. Amen  
@Rev David Clowes 40 prayers for Advent 2020.

### **1<sup>st</sup> bible reading...Isaiah 9:2-7**

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.  
<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.  
<sup>4</sup> For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> 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.  
<sup>7</sup> His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.

**Let's sing again, a familiar Advent favourite  
STF 180 (the video version is rather upbeat)**

O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel (repeat)

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel (repeat)

O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel (repeat x 3)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKmmPvGf\\_Q0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKmmPvGf_Q0)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Bible reading Micah 5:1-5**

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.  
<sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.  
<sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; <sup>5</sup> and he shall be the one of peace.

**Let's continue by singing together: a new song to the tune 'See amid the winter snow'**

"He shall be the one of peace;  
he will come from Bethlehem."  
Long ago, a prophet preached,  
giving hope to people then.  
God, you sent your Chosen One,  
Jesus Christ, your only Son.

As we celebrate his birth,  
may we seek your peace on earth.

"He shall rule in Israel,  
he who comes from ancient days."  
This was wondrous news to tell  
cause for great and thankful praise!  
God, you sent us Christ to reign;  
as a humble king he came.  
May we honour him today  
as we follow in his Way.

"He shall stand and feed his flock  
in the power of the Lord,  
In the majesty of God,  
all the land shall live secure."  
God you sent a Shepherd here,  
strong, protective, always near,  
May we put our trust in him,  
Shepherd born in Bethlehem.

© 2012 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=mceUAmGQ8EI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mceUAmGQ8EI)

**Today's message.**

The opening paragraph found in the 'Prophets' section of the old Local Preachers training course begins with this question "Is there a word from the Lord?"

This is what King Zedekiah asked in the book of Jeremiah 37:17. In the midst of a national crisis as Jerusalem was besieged by the vast Babylonian army, the king was anxious to hear a message and receive some sound advice from God. And who better to relay that message to him than the prophet Jeremiah, who it just so happened had been thrown into prison on the orders of Zedekiah himself!

Because prophets were believed to be proclaimers of God's word. They were the channels through which God spoke. Sometimes offering words of comfort, sometimes offering words of calm, sometimes offering word of challenge, sometimes offering words of condemnation!

And of course it wasn't just into the world of religion and faith that the prophets spoke but their words rang loud and clear into the realms of politics, social structures, economics and culture. Neither was it just limited to words as many of the prophets performed very unusual,

dramatic and eye catching acts to enforce their message.

Throughout scriptures we hear of prophets, men (and occasionally women) who were divinely called and then appointed by God, to speak to God's people, and it should not be forgotten to speak up on behalf of the people to God. Quite a daunting task as I am sure you can appreciate. I remember sitting in a classroom at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia, during the year that I spent studying there.

The subject was the Major Prophets, and the lecturer posed a question to the people before him. 'How many of you,' he asked, 'would like to have a prophetic voice in your ministry?' Everyone's hand shot up. 'That's good' said the professor, 'Now just remembering the fate that befell most of the prophets,' he continued, reminding everyone that most met with a grisly end, 'How many of you would still like to be seen as a prophet?' Let's just say that the number of hands shooting into the air was significantly less than before. Being a prophet, both then and now, puts you in the firing lines with lots of people on different sides all taking careful aim.

The words of the prophets evoke the past, influence the present and look to the future. To speak to a current situation in which the prophets intended audience found itself was the main aim but words of prophecy can also to look forward into the future and speak to what might happen. Or, with the great benefit of hindsight, be used to explain or show that what has happened did indeed fulfil some ancient declaration. Indeed Matthew's account of Jesus birth is littered with the word 'fulfil' explaining that what occurred during this birth narrative did so to fulfil words that had been spoken in earlier times, looking forward to the birth of the Messiah.

Indeed as we journey through Advent and the build up to celebrating Christmas, we encounter words from the prophets Isaiah and Micah, ones that are familiar components of our traditional nine lessons and carol services. In his original context, Isaiah was speaking eight centuries before Jesus is born, speaking into a time of potential disaster. The northern

kingdom has already been conquered and is now subject to rule by the Assyrians. This too will soon be the fate of the southern Kingdom of Judah because they have broken their covenant relationship with God. But there is hope for the future. Although biblical scholarship has a very broad spectrum, most scholars would agree that the passage was originally aimed to celebrate a descendant of David and future king of Judah, one who would lead the people back to God.

As for Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, again speaking in the late eighth and early seventh centuries, we should not be surprised to discover another prophet voice echoing during this period of great upheaval in Israel's history. There are threats for foreign powers, there is widespread corruption, and injustice is rampant. As a result the northern kingdom of Samaria will be crushed and Jerusalem too is doomed. Yet once again there is hope. A ruler will come who will stand and feed his flock in the name of the Lord (Micah 5:4) but perhaps not from where people might imagine.

Whether or not you understand and believe these prophetic words uttered some seven centuries before his birth to be directly or indirectly referring to Jesus, I will leave that for you to ponder but in these uncertain times, in these times of upheaval, in these times of political unrest, in these times of social division, what would it mean if we did indeed have someone to lead and guide us that fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah and Micah, right here, right now?

What would it be like to be led by someone whose character, nature, way of doing, speaking and being illuminated the darkness like a great light? A great light that doesn't just show us the way by illuminating our path but a great light that helps to show us all, as individuals, as communities, as nations, where and how we are going wrong by exposing all the things we would prefer to keep hidden away in secret, in the shadows, in the darkness.

What would it be like to be led by someone you not only exuded joy but also promoted joy wherever she or he went? A joy that was as infectious and contagious as this current virus

we are all enduring. A joy that uplifted and transformed lives.

What would it be like to be led by someone who lifted the oppression, the burden, the weight that keep people trapped, downtrodden and less than who they could be, instead of attempting not just to restrict people but to make them feel less worthy, less valued, less loved?

What would it like to be led by someone who could offer wise considered council rather than off the cuff remarks and tweets, someone who sought to be diplomatic rather than confrontational, something who sought to heal wounds rather than tear open old scars, someone who sought to find the things we have in common rather than the things which make us different?

What would it be like to be led by someone whose authority came from how they lived out their life, by someone who gained our respect rather than demanded it, by someone we looked up to rather than feared, by someone who was able to mix with all rather than a select few?

What would it be like to be led by someone who was a peacemaker, not a peace breaker or peace faker? Someone who would not just be flavour of the moment but whose rule would last not for a few years but forever.

What if that someone was, to echo the prophet Micah, to come from the most unexpected of places? What if he or she came from a different background, a different upbringing, a different education, a different life experience, a different world view and a different perspective on what was truly important in life.

And last but by no means least, what would it be like to actually be that kind of person yourself because as followers of Jesus that it was we are called to be. We are called to be lights in the darkness, bringers of joy, deliverers of freedom, builders of bridges, fountains of wisdom, channels of peace, whoever we are and wherever we come from, whether that is within a relationship, a family, a church, a work place ,a community or an even wider context.

If we are to offer prophetic voices here and now then it will not a comfortable position that we find ourselves in. If we speak truth to power we will run up against opposition. If we aim to challenge the rulers of this world in order to usher in a new kind of kingdom we will be met with resistance. But if we truly listen to what God might be trying to say to us, if we open ourselves up to being God's messengers, if our prophetic voices join together then perhaps we can play our small part in answering the cry still heard today.... "Is there a word from the Lord?"

### **Prayers of Intercessions**

We pray for the issues that have dominated our news headlines during this past week

We pray for those offering prophetic voices today

We pray for students returning home from universities

We pray for Human Rights day

We join together to say the words of the Lord's prayer...Our Father.....

### **Let's conclude this act of worship by singing again STF 178**

Long ago, prophets knew  
Christ would come, born a Jew.  
Come to make all things new;  
Bear his People's burden,  
Freely love and pardon.  
Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!  
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!  
When he comes,  
When he comes,  
Who will make him welcome?

God in time, God in man,  
This is God's timeless plan:  
He will come, as a man,  
Born himself of woman,  
God divinely human.  
Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!  
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!  
When he comes,  
When he comes,  
Who will make him welcome?

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeLA1LhgFA4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeLA1LhgFA4)

**A blessing... Go with open hearts and ears  
to hear the word from the Lord and then  
pass it on to all you meet. Amen**