



The Methodist Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Christmas Day 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

Opening prayer

Let's begin by raising our voices in joy to sing STF 202 Hark the herald angels sing

Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic hosts proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ by highest Heav'n 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 Emmanuel
Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the Heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n 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:

On this day, at this time, here in this place and in countless other places around the world, Christians gather, gather together in faith, gather together in community

The old and the young, the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish, women, men and children

On this day, God calls us to rejoice, calls us to shout aloud, calls us to declare to all who will listen, calls us to proclaim with voices raised in unison, the true message of Christmas, the true meaning of this sacred time. The birth of the Messiah

On this day God offers us an invitation. To join with the angels in bringing good news To share the adrenaline rush of the shepherds To experience the amazement of the Magi To feel the joy of a young mother with child

On this day God invites us to spend time with him, incarnate in human flesh

To spend time just as we are, coming just as ourselves, with all our frailties, with all our failings, with all our faults

On this day God calls each and everyone of us to hear words of comfort, to hear words of peace, to hear words of justice, to hear words of forgiveness

On this day God comes to spend time with us. As individuals, as family, as friends, as a community of faith

Comes not as one born with the trapping of power. Comes not as one born with the

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqooC4ZG75Y

privilege of position. Comes not as one born in a Royal palace

But as a helpless babe, born in a wind swept stable. God made flesh. In Bethlehem.

On this day God fulfils his promises made long ago to renew us by his presence. Revive us now by his spirit and restore us through his Word. Amen

This morning's reading John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, [a] and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. [b]

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, [c] and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, [d] full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, [e] who is close to the Father's heart, [f] who has made him known

Let's sing again STF 196

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 lay 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 the celebration,
It's a very special day;
come and share our jubilation,
there's a new King born today!
there's a new king born today!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMqG5M76tFE

Today's message.

**In what I hope is a once in a lifetime event,
here is a locked down version of the
nativity story.**

Due to the unprecedented number of e mails to the church website, letters to the ministers and complaints raised at various church council meetings, the organizing committee have decided to reveal why the proposed Nottingham North East Nativity 2020 has been cancelled at such short notice.

P...reproduction got off to a shaky start with Mary suddenly announcing that she was pregnant, a situation that occurred whilst Mary was out shopping at her local Tesco Express and received news of a very unexpected item in the bagging area. This proved a major deviation from the initial draft of the script and a nightmare for the costume designers at such

short notice. Then leading man, Joseph, threatened to quit the production entirely after discovering that another actor, Angel Gabriel, had been bumped up the billing via a couple of dramatic cameo appearances that utilized almost all the plays budget on CGI effects.

Discovering he wasn't going to be 'the Daddy' of the production has serious consequences for Joseph's mental health and well being. Demanding both lie detector and paternity tests before he would agree to continue it was only a daily 30 min workout routine with his new mate Jo that allowed him to see the light in the darkness. That and the occasional quarentini.

News quickly spread like a virus and the leading couple soon found the rest of the cast began to socially distant themselves, washing their hands of the whole affair constantly and covering their faces to mask their contempt as regular news briefings were shared. One of the villagers was discovered to be a super spreader of gossip, rumours and lies and fearing Mary would be vulnerable and have little or no immunity Joseph decided she would be better to shield in a support bubble with her cousin Elizabeth. Through the use of his new phone app Joseph was confident he'd be able to track and trace her movements during the journey. Or so he thought!

Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months. It was a real coronacoaster of emotions and experiences. With Joseph having already been furloughed from his job as a carpenter there was little money for basics such as pasta, flour or toilet rolls, not that there was any to be had in the few shops that remained open.

Thankfully a local food bank delivered weekly parcels to the expectant couple. With no consensus of an economic cure in sight and the NHS at breaking point things were looking bleak. "God only knows why this is happening to me?" Mary mumbled under her breath, frustrated that all her pre natal care had been cancelled as it was not deemed essential at this time. Looking at her rapidly swelling midriff she was fattening not flattening the curve.

Despite all her problems Mary's faith remained unshaken. Faith in her God and his promise of salvation for the world. Unshaken despite the

various false prophets who had foretold the arrival of a saviour. One had proclaimed 'Herd Immunity', another 'Pfizer' although that got a very cold reception, a third declared that 'Moderna' was the answer and finally 'Oxford Astra Zenica' was the name on everyone's lips. Mary shook her head. She thought she had misheard at first but she hadn't. Joseph had confirmed what the angel had said. The saviour of the world was to be called 'Jesus'

News of a census was the last thing the couple needed. Mary was still in the high risk group and Joseph dreaded the thought of having to make a trip back to the place of his ancestor's birth. Being a true northerner, Joseph had no desire to move south, even for a few days. Arranging travel had also proved problematic with all cheap advance purchase tickets having been snapped up by students keen to get home from university. In the end the only available transport was a taxi driven by Don Key.

As for the possibility of getting any kind of accommodation, well Trip Advisor had already been implied that because everyone was having to take a staycation this year public demand for rooms would be huge. They'd be lucky to find anywhere at such short notice. Still at least they had all that banana bread for the journey.

It wasn't just the leading couple who were having problems; the supporting cast too was feeling the pressure. The angels, who came from all over the globe, and whose job was to deliver a message to some key worker shepherds out on the frontline, really struggled to master local phrases such as 'Eh up me duck'.

In the end they simply stood clapping and flapping their wings, one of them even banged a saucepan to get everyone's attention. Finally they decided it might be easier if they sang their message about a babe in a manger that had a certain "X" factor. Back and forth they went across the sky, virtually forming a choir...Zoom, Zoom, Zoom, Zoom.

As for the Magi or so-called 'wise men', well they struggled to even enter the UK due to Covid travel restrictions and then had to self isolate for 14 days upon arrival in the country. Plus three bearded men from the east carrying

suspicious packages (imagine forgetting to put your 100mls of liquid frankincense in a clear plastic bag) had been met with stop and search tactics at their point of entry under new sweeping anti-terrorism powers.

Now having been forced to cover the expenses for their 14 day period of self isolation, and let's not forget how expensive (not to mention difficult) it is to put three camels into kennels, they now only had a bit of gold, 25 mls of Frankincense and just a smidge of myrrh left. Social bubble restrictions also meant that plans to meet up with the shepherds and go to visit the young family together, whether that be indoors, in a garden or even public space had to be put on hold. It was going to have to be separate visits.

As for the three advisors to the man currently attempting to appear in charge, they didn't even seem to have the same script as each other with their lines almost appearing to be improvised on the spot. Plus a proposed executive order to massacre all under-twos was clearly going to be a crime against humanity and resulted in widespread protests and demonstrations by groups claiming that All Lives Matter.

So there you have it, an unmitigated disaster from start to finish. One that no amount of pondering could put right. Good reason to be thankful then that in the original production it was God rather than us sat in the director's chair, otherwise Mary and Joseph might never ever have ended up in such a stable relationship.

Wishing you all "peace on earth" this Christmas.

Prayers of Intercessions

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

We pray for those Christians unable to gather in peace and safety to celebrate Christ's birth.

We pray for those who are repeatedly turned away, with excuses that there is no room 'for them' here

We pray for peace on earth and good will to all

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

Let us conclude this act of worship by singing again STF 212

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, (Repeat x 3)
Christ the Lord.

God of God, Light of light,
Lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God, Begotten not created,
O come let us adore him, (Repeat x 3)
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation!
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above,
'Glory to God
in the highest!'
O come let us adore him, (Repeat x 3)
Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born for our salvation;
Jesus, to thee be glory given!
Word of the Father
now in flesh appearing.
O come let us adore him, (Repeat x 3)
Christ the Lord.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8dgl4-bVPU

A blessing...

May the acceptance of Joseph, the grace of Mary, the hospitality of the inn keeper, the enthusiasm of the shepherds, the perseverance of the Magi, but most of all, the peace of the Christ child, be with you, with all those that you love, and all those you sometimes struggle to love, this day and for evermore. **Amen**