



# The **Methodist** Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Christmas Day 2022



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

## Let's begin by raising our voices in joy to sing STF 215 See amid the winters snow

See, amid the winter's snow,  
Born for us on Earth below,  
See, the tender Lamb appears,  
Promised from eternal years.

### **Chorus:**

*Hail, thou ever blessed morn,  
Hail redemption's happy dawn,  
Sing through all Jerusalem,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.*

Lo, within a manger lies  
He who built the starry skies;  
He who, throned in height sublime,  
Sits among the cherubim.  
*Hail...*

Say, ye holy shepherds, say,  
What your joyful news today;  
Wherefore have ye left your sheep  
On the lonely mountain steep?  
*Hail...*

"As we watched at dead of night,  
Lo, we saw a wondrous light:  
Angels singing 'Peace On Earth'  
Told us of the Saviour's birth."  
*Hail...*

Sacred Infant, all divine,  
What a tender love was Thine,  
Thus to come from highest bliss  
Down to such a world as this.  
*Hail...*

Teach, O teach us, Holy Child,  
By Thy face so meek and mild,  
Teach us to resemble Thee,  
In Thy sweet humility.  
*Hail...*

Virgin Mother, Mary blest  
By the joys that fill thy breast,  
Pray for us, that we may prove  
Worthy of the Saviour's love.  
*Hail...*

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdVnhE6BLal](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdVnhE6BLal)

## **Opening prayer**

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 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

**Let's sing again STF 216  
See him lying on a bed of straw**

See him lying on a bed of straw:  
a draughty stable with an open door;  
Mary cradling the babe she bore  
the prince of glory is his name.

*O now carry me to Bethlehem  
to see the Lord of love again:  
just as poor as was the stable then,  
the prince of glory when he came.*

2 Star of silver, sweep across the skies,  
show where Jesus in the manger lies;  
shepherds, swiftly from your stupor rise  
to see the saviour of the world!  
*O now carry me...*

3 Angels, sing again the song you sang,  
sing the glory of God's gracious plan;  
Sing that Bethl'em's little baby can  
be the saviour of us all.  
*O now carry me...*

4 Mine are riches, from your poverty,  
from your innocence, eternity;  
mine, forgiveness by your death for me,

child of sorrow for my joy.  
*O now carry me...*

Michael Perry (1942 - 1996)  
© Mrs B Perry/Jubilate Hymns

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKKTZgtf58Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKKTZgtf58Q)

**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,<sup>[a]</sup> 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.<sup>[b]</sup>

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,<sup>[c]</sup> 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,<sup>[d]</sup> 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,<sup>[e]</sup> who is close to the Father's heart,<sup>[f]</sup> who has made him known

## Today message The Day God dressed down

I came across this little story a few years ago and thought that in a slightly adapted form it was appropriate for us today

Christmas was in full swing and Ben had arrived at the department store ready for his first day as Father Christmas.

“Whatever you do,” said the store manager, “don’t do anything to frighten the children. Some of their parents gets extremely worried about the whole event, as if something horrible is going to happen to their little boy or girl.”

“Oh and one more thing,” said the store manager, “don’t waste too much time with each one, just in and out quick as you can.”

Armed with this advice Ben went into the changing rooms and put on his Santa uniform. He looked at himself in the mirror and wasn’t sure he recognised himself before picking up his sack and going to before sit himself down on the large ornate chair ready for the first eager child to come into his grotto.

9 am came and the shop opened. First one, then another and then another child came in but as soon as they saw the imposing figure of Ben sat high and mighty on his big chair they were terrified. They shouted, they screamed, they kicked, they cried, they ran away. Nothing would calm them down, certainly not Ben’s attempts to be extra jolly.....that just seemed to make things worse...not even the hugs and assurances of their parents could restore calm.

This was turning into a disaster.

Finally Ben was struck by an idea. He knew it was against everything that was expected of him, he knew that it broke all the rules, he knew the manager of the store would be mad but slowly he began to take off his uniform piece by piece.

First he took off came the red hood. Then he removed the glasses.

Off came the red robe. Until finally he removed the bushy white beard.

Within a few moments the stern looking old man with beady eyes dressed all in red, sat on the big chair that towered over everybody had disappeared to be replaced by a bright faced, twinkling eyed young boy dressed in jeans and a t shirt. A young boy who climbed down off his huge throne and knelt down on the floor so that he was the same height as the children

The children looked in amazement, and slowly but surely one by one they let go of their parent’s hands and began to walk slowly towards Ben. Soon he had a crowd of keen, eager laughing children sat at his feet listening to his every word.

Ben talked to each of the children, asking their names, answering their questions and getting to know them as individuals. And only when the relationship between them had been established, did Ben slowly but surely began to put his uniform, his disguise back on again, the cloak, the hood, the glasses and finally the beard.

And as he did so he told a story about how a very long time ago, God himself had taken off his normal uniform, one which would have frightened anyone who saw it and instead had chosen to come to earth as a little baby boy, dressed only in a woollen blanket. A baby named Jesus

The children stared wide eyed in silence thinking about the story Ben had told them. Suddenly one of the children’s parents pushed through the crowd. He looked rather angry. He took hold of their daughters hand and shaking his head at Ben said

“What a shame...you have spoiled all the magic of Christmas!”

Spoiled the magic of Christmas?” thought Ben to himself, “Perhaps...but perhaps I have just begun a lifetime of wonder”

Anyone looking at the preaching plan will see that many of the Sundays during the year have particular names or themes associated with them...racial justice, back to church, missions, local preachers, harvest, Pentecost, advent and off course today is Christmas Day.

I am sure some of you are wondering why I often chose to come to church on Christmas Day and lead worship wearing ordinary everyday clothes rather than a dog collar?

Well perhaps another good name for today apart from Christmas Day would be Dress Down Sunday. The day when we remember the moment in time when God dressed down. When God removed his power, his glory, his majesty, his might and dressed down, coming to earth as a vulnerable, helpless, exposed child.

The day when God laid to one side all that might scare us away.  
The day when God appeared as one of us.  
The day when God did not tower over us but knelt down at our level.

To talk to us, to get to know us, to be one of us

A day when we discover that in God's kingdom there is room...room for all ages and genders, room for difference, room for those seeking sanctuary, room for continuing revelation, room for all God's creation, room for those at the fringes of society and thankfully room for you and me. Let's just hope that we can make room for God.

Because day when to paraphrase the words of a hymn written by Christina Rossetti

“Love dressed down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, love divine,  
  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and angels gave the sign”

### **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 a new song to the very familiar tune for 'Hark the Herald Angels sing'.**

All of you who walked in darkness  
who have known the fear of night  
Now rejoice and sing with gladness;  
come and see the wondrous light!  
God has turned your tears to songs,  
lifting burdens, righting wrongs.  
God sent us a tiny boy  
bringing hope and peace and joy.  
In one little baby's birth,  
God knelt down to love the earth.

Still Christ comes to save God's people,  
still he comes to those oppressed.  
To the folks who toil and struggle,  
God has sent the very best.  
To the young and to the old,  
to the homeless, tired and cold,  
To the lost, to those who mourn,  
to the world, a child is born.  
In one little baby's birth,  
God knelt down to love the earth.

In this time of celebration,  
may we show what life can be,  
As we care for God's creation,  
as we serve the Prince of Peace.  
Seeking justice everywhere,  
lifting burdens others bear,  
May we gladly serve and pray  
knowing why we live this way:  
In one little baby's birth,  
God knelt down to love the earth.

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### **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**

