

# Worship at Home

## Christmas

24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> December 2020

### Call to worship

I bring you good news of great joy:  
unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given.  
He is Christ the Lord.  
We worship and adore him.



### Let us pray

Jesus of Nazareth, child of Bethlehem, you were not born in a stable, but you were laid in a manger, a manger filled with warm hay, probably in the living room of Joseph's kinsfolk in Bethlehem. We have all woken in homes today - some busy, some quiet; some permanent, some temporary. Help us see that our homes are the places where you come to live in all your glory. And gather us here, your people, held in the peace of your birth among us - ordinary, and extraordinary, all at once. **Amen.**

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 314 Child in a manger

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| <p>1 Child in the manger, infant of Mary<br/>Outcast and Stranger, Lord of us all<br/>Child Who inherits all our<br/>transgressions<br/>All our demerits upon Him fall</p> | <p>2 Once the most holy Child of salvation<br/>Gently and lowly lived here below<br/>Now as our glorious mighty Redeemer<br/>See Him victorious over each foe</p> |
| <p>3 Prophets foretold Him, Infant of wonder<br/>Angels behold Him on His throne<br/>Worthy our Saviour of all our praises<br/>Happy forever are His own</p>               |   |

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The first Christmas celebrations were mixed: quiet reflection by Mary during the stillness of night, interrupted by singing angels, excited shepherds, and who knows what animal noises. Like the shepherds, we come to the manger to worship Jesus. And we may want to do so with quiet stillness or exuberant celebration - or both!

### Let us be quiet before our God.

Lord, we come today to witnesses the birth of Jesus. We approach you in joy and humility, in gratitude and hope, glad to honour what is most important today: that all life is to be honoured and peace is to be sought.

As we sit in silence we remember other Christmas nights where there was great noise, activity and when we were able to come to church to worship. We

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tqvF71VnDkDse8lE3q8056H7oRxxuQh/view?usp=sharing>

remember the words of many Carols but right now the Carol 'Silent Night' echoes in our minds. Reminding us of other Christmases where we were able to come together but Lord we know that, 'You welcome us to celebrate and worship no matter where we are, who we are with, or what we are doing.' Tonight of all nights as we anticipate and celebrate your coming, we ask that you come to us. Make yourself know to us. That we feel your presence...

As we sit before you Lord, with a candle lit or our Christmas trees dancing with light, we still ourselves and our minds and our hearts before you...

You are welcome in our space Lord. Amen

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 309 Still the Night

<p>1 Still the night, holy the night! Sleeps the world; hid from sight, Mary and Joseph in stable bare watch o'er the child belovèd and fair, sleeping in heavenly rest, sleeping in heavenly rest.</p>	<p>2 Still the night, holy the night! Shepherds first saw the light, heard resounding clear and long, far and near, the angel-song, 'Christ the Redeemer is here!' 'Christ the Redeemer is here!'</p>
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3 Still the night, holy the night!  
Son of God, O how bright  
love is smiling from thy face!  
Strikes for us now the hour of grace,  
Saviour, since thou art born!  
Saviour, since thou art born!

As you sing  
along – what is  
different and  
unexpected  
about the video?

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1z1OIFHON05J7PjGtAq5A1aySAXK1Z8/view?usp=sharing>

The Christmas Gospel Luke 2.1-20  
(Jessica has kindly read it for us)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/146C5g0v8Dowxd6-PFSHUJQGJi-fgyXZx/view?usp=sharing>

### Reflection for Christmas 2020

I wonder what excites you most about Christmas Day? Here is a poem - by Marian Swinger.

#### The First Christmas

It never snows at Christmas in that dry and dusty land.  
Instead of freezing blizzards, there are palms and drifting sands,  
and years ago a stable and a most unusual star  
and three wise men who followed it, by camel, not by car,  
while, sleepy on the quiet hills, a shepherd gave a cry.  
He'd seen a crowd of angels in the silent starlit sky.  
In the stable, ox and ass stood very still and calm  
and gazed upon the baby, safe and snug in Mary's arms.  
And Joseph, lost in shadows, face lit by an oil lamp's glow  
stood wondering, that first Christmas Day, two thousand years ago.

In the business of today, how can we stay focused on the manger? With all that is going on in the world around us... for what is going on in homes near us... In all our Christmas exuberance, in trying to get a balance between business and stillness, we can easily forget that Jesus came to save the whole world.

Among the late Sir Arthur C Clarke's many stories, one of the most thought provoking is his 1953 novel *Childhood's End*, in which he explores people's reactions to discovering that the human race has reached an evolutionary dead end and there will be no more births. The final generation of children is so unlike their parents psychologically that they have to be separated from them for their own protection. The adults react in different ways: some more emotional, some more rational; and readers are left to ponder how they themselves might react to such a situation.

Children are born in almost every imaginable human situation: from the safety and security of a well-resourced hospital or comfortable home, to the precariousness and danger of a natural disaster area or war zone. Luke's Gospel describes Jesus' own birth as taking place in far from ideal circumstances. Whatever the situation, however, we can choose to celebrate the birth of any child as a renewal of hope; a divine promise that - no matter how badly we may have messed up our own lives, the lives of others and even the planet as a whole - God has not given up on us, either as individuals or as a species. Jesus came this Christmas as any other to be with us.

Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the Temple with hearts full of gratitude for his safe delivery and full of hope for his life. The response they receive from Anna and Simeon affirms their joy and thankfulness, and goes further to assert that Jesus will be the one through whom God brings redemption to Jerusalem - whose very name means 'Vision of Peace' - and salvation to Jew and Gentile alike. But Mary is also warned that this will be no quick fix, no easy ride.

If we truly want a better future, we have to be ready to embrace the sacrifices which that future requires. In the past week I have heard so many people announcing that Christmas 2020 is cancelled and this has made me feel so sad inside. Christmas 2020 is not cancelled, we are just doing things a little differently this year. So, take time this Christmas to be silent before our God, to feel the peace of the season. Our world may be in chaos, but God offers us peace.

I pray that as you read this you will feel God's presence with you and know the love of Jesus. May you know the Joy of the season. May God bless and keep you all safe.

**May God provide...**

For every trial, a way through. For every tear, a tender hug. For every dying dream, a ray of sunshine. For every dark thought, a bright promise. For every problem, wisdom from above. For every pain, hope for the future. For every loss, new love. For every lie, fresh truth.

May God above give peace to all who call upon His name. May we walk in obedience and dwell in His presence all the days of our lives. Amen.

## Prayers of intercession

Lord. Today, in all the demands, we pray for those who are facing a Christmas without someone they love. We can all name people who are alone today (name Them and if you are alone, know that many others are praying for you today). God of goodness, hear us and be with us and help us to remember others today.

Today, in all the delights, we pray for those who are facing a Christmas alone. God of goodness, hear us and be with us.

Today, in all the celebration, we pray for those who are facing conflicts. God of goodness, hear us and be with us.

Today, in all the time at tables, we pray for those who are hungry. God of goodness, hear us and be with us. Amen.

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 322 Good Christians all, rejoice.

<sup>1</sup> 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!

<sup>2</sup> Good Christians all, rejoice  
with heart, and soul, and voice!  
Now ye hear of endless bliss,  
Jesus Christ was born for this;  
He hath opened the heavenly door,  
and all are blest for evermore.  
Christ was born for this!  
Christ was born for this!

<sup>3</sup> 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!

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God is love and grace. Grace is above undeserved love. An undeserved present is given. Are we willing to accept the present? What really matters is are we open to the gift that God is giving. This is the season of grace and love. God has given Jesus to us because He loves us. God has given Jesus for us. Draw close to Jesus and receive Joy which is stronger than the storms of life. Joy that survives the struggles and enables us to stand firm. Jesus has come because He loves each one of us.

God, help us to live today with joy, knowing that in small moments, today and every day, we can see you with us and honour you.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. Amen.

*Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.*

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*If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you. 4*