



**Call to Worship: John 1: 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, full of grace and truth.

A very happy Christmas to you. May you know the peace and joy of Jesus the Christ child today as you worship.

**A time to be still and pray**

Yea Lord, we greet you, born this happy morning!

We greet you as love:

love that lifts up the lowly;

love that includes the outcast;

love that heals the broken hearted.

We greet you as hope:

hope that injustice will end;

hope that the vulnerable are cared for;

hope that life in all its fulness is a reality for all of creation.

We greet you as peace:

peace that passes our understanding;

peace that comforts the fearful;

peace that is everlasting.

Yea Lord, we greet you, born this happy morning!

Amen.

**Hymn: StF196 Come and join the celebration** <https://youtu.be/sp2QIKTYT8>

*Come and join the celebration, it's a very special day;  
come and share our jubilation, there's a new King born today!*

1 See the shepherds hurry down to Bethlehem,  
gaze in wonder at the Son of God who lay before them:

2 Wise men journey, led to worship by a star,  
kneel in homage, bringing precious gifts from lands afar, so,

3 'God is with us,' round the world the message bring,  
he is with us, 'Welcome,' all the bells on earth are pealing:

*Valerie Collison (b. 1933)*

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**Introduction**

Today is a day to celebrate. The waiting and the preparation of Advent is over and Christ has come.

However, you are marking today, whatever your circumstances, be assured of God's presence with you as you worship. Be assured that Christ, the one promised long ago has come, is coming to you now and is coming again.

Why not light a candle as you continue to worship to signify that Jesus the Light of the World has come.

**Today's Bible Reading:** Luke 2: 1-19.

**Hymn StF202 Hark! The herald-angels sing.** <https://youtu.be/XmtKIOB-0-I>

Hark! The herald-angels sing  
glory to the new-born King,  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with the angelic host proclaim:  
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'

Hark! The herald-angels sing  
glory to the new-born King.

Christ, by highest heaven 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 men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel:

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
risen 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:

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)  
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition,  
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### **Time to Reflect**

No doubt parents up and down the country, even across the world, will have been woken this morning by excited children. I can remember waking my own parents at some ridiculous hour of Christmas morning, delighted that the day had eventually arrived and wanting to make the most of every second, and being told to go back to bed. My poor parents eventually relented at about six-thirty. Christmas Day was always the most wonderful day for me, of course the presents played an important part, in those days, we only got new toys on our birthday and at Christmas and they were never as expensive and plentiful as children get today. But my excitement went far beyond the gifts, my parents decorated the front room on Christmas Eve, and we weren't allowed into the front room until dad had turned the lights on the tree on.

Looking back over many years now Christmas has always been about the experience. As I prepare this service today, just two days after being at Bramford Road Church for the live nativity "follow the star" new memories have been born in my mind this Christmas. There is something special about standing by the stable on the field at Bramford Road with all the familiar characters, a real donkey, and a real baby. I feel privileged to be able to see the faces on the children and they look on in wonderment as the story is being told and I am reminded that we are not simply re telling a story, we are making memories that those children will still remember in their old age.

As a teenager, I was asked to read in a carol service Luke 2: 1-7 and spending time trying to get my tongue around the name "Quirinius" why could God have picked a better time to come into the world than when somebody with such a ridiculous name was the governor of Syria, and I can remember wondering why it mattered to St Luke who was the governor of Syria anyway. It does matter though, because those few words at the beginning of the Gospel story enable us to pin point the time when Jesus was born. Maybe because of my memories of reading and re reading, I have come to love this passage from Luke.

During our Advent journey this year, a lot of Churches have used the Methodist Church campaign "There is room" and I think that this passage from scripture reminds us once again that Jesus came not just for the religious people of his day, not for the upper echelons of society, but for the meek and humble. I have never given it much thought before, the stable is significant, because it somehow draws in all creation. For the first time this year, I imagine bugs in the hay, mice scurrying around the floor, birds nesting in the rafters, chickens clucking, and although there is no direct mention of the ox and the ass in the scripture reading, this is a stable, and I can't imagine the owner turfing his animals out to make way for a young couple in an expectant state. There is room for all of nature in the Christmas story.

The first witnesses always feel to be important in any major religious event and God has a habit throughout old testament times of picking some of the strangest characters to witness for him. In this story, it is a gang of shepherds on the hillside. These men would have been fairly low in the grand order of importance at the time of the birth of Jesus, they would almost certainly have been poor, uneducated men, who were used to being looked down upon, yet it was these men that God chose to be the first witnesses to the birth, and remarkably, while the learned people took three years and still didn't understand what was going on, these shepherds got it immediately.

As we busy ourselves with Church activities, with family responsibilities, with catering, spending time with family and all the other things that occupy us in this festive season, the biggest question is "Is there room for God?" Christmas Day when I was a lad started with the opening of Christmas presents, dad would always put a record of carols on to accompany our unwrapping, with angelic voices singing "Once in royal David's city" which made the experience even more memorable, we would have our breakfast and then walk down to chapel for the Christmas Day service. Some families never attended the Christmas Day service, because the day was far too busy to find time to go to chapel, I could never understand this, surely this day of all days people would want to worship God.

### **Questions to ponder:**

- What are your favourite memories of Christmas from your own story? What makes them special? Why?

- What new experiences have you had in Christmas 2022 that will make this a memorable Christmas for you in the future? Some of these will be happy, but some will be sad? Think for a moment about those people you know who will find this Christmas particularly difficult. Pray that they may find peace and comfort.
- How much space have you given to God this Christmas? On our advent journey as we have reflected on the theme “Room for all” we remember all that God has done for us. How much room do we make in our lives today for God?

### **A time of prayer**

On this Christmas Day let us give thanks to God for coming among us in Jesus, bringing eternal hope...

On this Christmas Day, let us give thanks to God for those we love, whether they are near or far today...

On this Christmas Day, let us call to mind those for whom the promises of God seem far away:

...those who are lonely.

...those with increasing financial pressures.

...those without permanent accommodation.

...those seeking refuge in unfamiliar countries due to the fear of war.

On this Christmas Day, let us call to mind those who have gone before us who have faithfully told the Christmas story of God’s love coming to earth to younger generations.

On this Christmas Day, let us call to mind our own needs, and ask that the promises of Christmas might be true for us and for those we meet not just today, but every day...

### **The Lord’s Prayer**

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn 212 O Come all ye faithful** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfRubAv0NwE>

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant  
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem  
O come and behold Him, born the King of Angels

*O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him  
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord*

True God of true God, light of light eternal,  
Lo, he abhors not the virgin’s womb;  
Son of the Father, begotten, not created.

*O come, let us adore Him*

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,  
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;  
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps.

*O come, let us adore Him*

### **A prayer of blessing**

May the joy of the Christ Child surround you.  
May the peace of the Christ Child fill you.  
May the love of the Christ Child uplift you.  
May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

**Amen**

Lo, star led chieftains, Magi, Christ adoring,  
Offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
We to the Christ-child bring our hearts oblations:

*O come, let us adore Him*  
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*

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,  
Jesus to the be glory given:  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

*O come, let us adore Him*