

CIRCUIT WORSHIP FOR CHRISTMAS DAY 2020

“GOOD NEWS”

“Today, in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord”

(Luke 2:11)

Welcome to worship on this Christmas Day. Whatever time you are sharing in this worship and wherever you are, take time to be still in the presence of God, who loved this world so much that Jesus came to earth to be the Saviour of the World. The one the prophets had foretold was born in Bethlehem, the City of David. He is Christ the Lord.

Whether you are on your own, or with others in your home this day, know that there are others who have shared or are sharing in this service too. Even though distance separates us, we worship God together and celebrate the birth of Jesus.

We sing our first hymn: O come all ye faithful, and, having waited until today to do so, we can now sing all the verses – including the last one – Yea Lord, we greet thee born this happy morning.

Hymn: O come all ye faithful STF 212, H&P 110

[\(1\) for KING & COUNTRY - O Come All Ye Faithful | Official Picture-Story Lyric Video | SCENE 10 - YouTube](#)

[\(1\) O Come, All Ye Faithful {Hymn} \[King's - 2013, № 18\] - YouTube](#)

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| 1 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 : | 4 Lo, star-led chieftains, Magi, Christ adoring, offer him incense, gold, and myrrh ; we to the Christ-child bring our hearts' oblations : |
| 2 True God of true God, Light of Light eternal, lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb ; Son of the Father, begotten, not created : | 5 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above : 'Glory to God in the highest :' |
| 3 See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle, leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze ; we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps : | 6 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be glory given : Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing : |
- Latin, 18th century, possibly by
John Francis Wade (c. 1711–1786)

*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord !*

Opening Prayers

Almighty God, we are here on this Christmas morning to worship you and to praise your name. We come to praise you for your love for this world, which was shown most amazingly in the sending of your Son, Jesus Christ. We praise you for your generosity in sending Jesus, the greatest gift the world has ever received. We praise you for your continued goodness to us and your care for us.

We ask your forgiveness Lord, for those times when Jesus has been ‘moved aside’ in the business and the busyness of Christmas. We are sorry for those times when we have not walked in the ways of peace and justice and love that He came to bring and continues to call us to follow for the baby in the manger, grew into

a man, who, in love, stretched out his arms upon the cross of Calvary and died and rose again that we might live forever.

By your Holy Spirit, empower us we pray, that, in our thoughts, words and actions, we may think, speak and share what it means to be in relationship with the living Lord Jesus and, in so doing, share the good news of Christmas, not just today, but each and every day. We ask this in His name, who taught us when we pray to say...

Our Father...

The Bible quotation with which this service began is from the reading we are now going to hear. In the hills above Bethlehem, shepherds are watching their sheep. They are in for a big surprise and some wonderful “Good news”.

Bible Reading: Luke 2: 1-14

We reflect on that reading as we sing our next carol “While shepherds watched their flocks by night.”

Hymn: While shepherds watched their flocks by night STF 221, H&P120

[\(1\) While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night With Lyrics - Kings College Choir - YouTube](#)

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| 1 While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground, the angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around. | 4 ‘The heavenly babe you there shall find to human view displayed, all meanly wrapped in swaddling bands, and in a manger laid.’ |
| 2 ‘Fear not,’ said he (for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind), ‘glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and humankind. | 5 Thus spake the seraph ; and forthwith appeared a shining throng of angels praising God, and thus addressed their joyful song : |
| 3 ‘To you in David's town this day is born of David's line a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord ; and this shall be the sign : | 6 ‘All glory be to God on high, and to the world be peace ; goodwill henceforth from heaven to earth begin and never cease.’ |

Nahum Tate (1652–1715)

Reflection

In a recent conversation I was asked if I had heard of the ‘Yorkshire Shepherdess’. Confessing my ignorance, I determined to investigate and found that Amanda Owen, - the Yorkshire Shepherdess – has written no less than three books about her life on a farm in the Yorkshire Dales with 700+ sheep, her husband and their nine children. Her day begins at 6am and ends at 10pm– and, like many today, I very much doubt she will have had Christmas Day ‘off’!!

Shepherding has always been hard, and I find it interesting that over recent years, there have been a number of stories of those who have pursued it, or some other form of farming as a new career, sometimes later on in life. The science of any form of agriculture is complex and this, alongside the sheer hard graft means such roles are definitely not for the faint-hearted.

And yet, at the time in which Luke writes, shepherds were some of the most derided people. They were considered ‘the lowest of the low’. People did not want to socialise with them, particularly when they had spent day after day up on the hillside with their sheep. They would have snatched opportunities for sleep, always with one or more keeping watch to protect the flock, so day turned into night, turned into day, rapidly and the flock were the priority at all times.

It remains for me one of the most wonderful parts of the Biblical account of Christmas, that those who first heard the news of the birth of Jesus, were those for whom there was very little ‘good news’, those on the

margins of society, those for whom life was hard. Good news broke into their lives in a spectacular way as an angel announced Jesus' birth and, looking directly at the shepherds, said "a Saviour has been born to YOU". This wasn't something that had happened for everyone else but them, or another thing that had passed them by, but good news for everyone and they were the FIRST to hear about it! And, the good news just kept coming, for the angel was joined by more angels who sang "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests" (Luke 2:14 (NIV)). God's love was heard in that message in the fields above Bethlehem - good news of love for all.

And good news, that demanded a response. There is no hesitation in Luke's account. "Let us go..." say the shepherds. "Let us go and see this thing that that has happened" (Luke 2:15 (NIV)). And they do so hurriedly, reaching their destination, and finding Mary and Joseph and Jesus lying in the manger.

Having found the source of this good news, though, we hear in Luke's account that this is good news to be shared. Once the shepherds saw Jesus, they simply could not keep this good news to themselves. They spread the news far and wide and they gave thanks to God for all they had witnessed in Bethlehem that night that would impact them for the rest of their lives.

And what of us this Christmas as we reach the end of a year where many of the headlines have not been about good news, where Christmas is different for many people in many ways. It's my prayer that we will hear again this Christmas the message of Good news for all people that the angels came to bring, of the Saviour born in Bethlehem, and that as the carol "O little town of Bethlehem" says he may be 'born in us today'. It's my prayer that we will respond to this good news, that it will be at the heart of who we are and permeate every aspect of our living. And it's my prayer that we will not keep this good news to ourselves, but share it, for Christ was born, in love, for ALL. AMEN.

We ask "Angels, sing again the song you sang....Sing that Bethlem's little baby can be the Saviour of us all" in our next hymn "See him lying on a bed of straw".

Hymn: See him lying on a bed of straw STF 216, H&P 118

[\(1\) CALYPSO CAROL SEE HIM LYING ON OF STRAW - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1 See him lying on a bed of straw ; draughty stable with an open door, Mary cradling the babe she bore ; the Prince of Glory is his name :</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>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.</i></p> <p>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 :</p> | <p>3 Angels, sing again the song you sang, sing the story of God's gracious plan ; sing that Bethl'em's little baby can be the Saviour of us all :</p> <p>4 Mine are riches from your poverty, from your innocence, eternity ; mine, forgiveness by your death for me ; child of sorrow for my joy :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Michael Perry (1942–1996)</p> |
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Prayers for Others and Ourselves

Loving Lord, this day as we celebrate the coming of Jesus into your world, we pray for your world. We pray for those for whom this Christmas takes place under threat of war, of hunger, of thirst, and for all those across the world impacted by Covid-19. As we celebrate the coming of the Prince of Peace, we pray for peace in and between nations, in families and relationships, in hearts and minds.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for your Church throughout the world, Lord as this Christmas Day is celebrated across the time zones, in buildings, on beaches, in homes, and online. We pray for those across your world who are persecuted for their faith in you, praying for courage and hope and sustaining for them. May we be bold in sharing the Good News of Christmas with others.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for those we know and love for whom this Christmas time is difficult. We pray for those who are unwell at this time, and those who care for them. We pray for those who are working this Christmas Day and unable to spend time with their families at other times this Christmas because of the current restrictions. We pray for those who are grieving this Christmas. Draw near to each we pray in their need, that they may know your presence and love.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Finally, Lord we pray for ourselves. May we hear and see and know again the good news of Christmas, may it live in and through us, transforming us more and more into Christlikeness and we may share your love in word and deed. AMEN.

Hymn: See amid the winter snow STF 215, H&P 117

[\(1\) See, Amid the Winter's Snow \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

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| 1 See, amid the winter's snow, born for us on earth below, see, the Lamb of God appears, promised from eternal years ! <i>Hail, the ever-blessèd morn ! Hail, redemption's happy dawn ! Sing through all Jerusalem : Christ is born in Bethlehem !</i> | 3 Say, you holy shepherds, say, what your joyful news today ; why then have you left your sheep on the lonely mountain steep ? |
| 2 Lo, within a manger lies he who built the starry skies, he who, throned in height sublime, sits amid the cherubim ! | 4 '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.' |
| | 5 Sacred infant, holy child, tender love so pure and mild comes from heaven's highest bliss down to such a world as this ! |

Edward Caswall (1814–1878)

Blessing

May the peace of the Prince of Peace fill your hearts and homes this Christmas time and always and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, AMEN.