

**DSW Methodist Circuit Written Service
for Advent Sunday 27 November 2022**

Welcome to this time of worship. You may like to have a candle ready to light.

Advent Candle Liturgy:

WHEN GOD REIGNS, THERE IS ROOM FOR YOU AND ME

It's Advent.

Not yet Christmas.

It's time for you and me to prepare.

To get ready for the coming of the Christ child.

The day will come, so now we prepare to welcome.

Let us take time to reflect for ourselves.

When God reigns

there is room for you and me.

Let us reflect on the path in life we have chosen.

When God reigns

there is room for you and me.

Let us reflect on God's love for us and all people.

When God reigns

there is room for you and me.

Let us reflect, be awake and be ready.

When God reigns

there is room for you and me.

Let us prepare to receive Christ, the most important gift of all.

When God reigns

there is room for you and me.

Let us light our first candle;

it is for **you and me** as we

watch and wait.

Hymn: STF 175 Light of the world

Light of the World,

You stepped down into darkness,

Opened my eyes, let me see

Beauty that made this heart adore You,

Hope of a life spent with You.

So here I am to worship,

Here I am to bow down,

Here I am to say that You're my God;

And You're altogether lovely,

Altogether worthy,

Altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days,

Oh so highly exalted,

Glorious in heaven above;

Humbly You came

To the earth You created,

All for love's sake became poor.

And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.

(Repeat)

Tim Hughes © 2000 Thankyou Music

Opening Prayers:

Loving and faithful God,

We are here to praise and worship you

for who you are and what you have done;

for your mercy and faithfulness to your people
down the ages.

who put their hope in you and were not
disappointed;

We praise you that in Jesus you come as one of
us,

sharing our life so we might share yours.

We praise you that we can know your coming
into our lives,

Through the power of your Spirit.

Sometimes in a blaze of glory,

and sometimes in quiet moments of knowing we
are loved;

We praise you that we know you will come again
in your glory,

In light and power that we cannot imagine,

And that one day every tongue will confess that
you are Lord of all.

We praise you for all your gifts to us day and day
out.

Loving living Lord, we come too, to say sorry and
to ask your forgiveness

for the times when we haven't kept watch for
you;

when we've been pre-occupied with our own
concerns and desires

instead of waiting on you, to learn your will for
us;

when we haven't noticed the needs of the people
around us;

when we haven't acknowledged the love that has
been shown to us.

Forgive our lack of watchfulness.

Help us to wait, to know your will.

Help us to look out for and respond to the needs
of others.

Help us to work & watch for your coming.

'Behold, I am making all things new' says the Lord
This is Christ's gracious word: 'Your sins are
forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Bible readings Isaiah 2:1-5 (*New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE)*)

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Matthew 24:36-44 (NRSVUE)

"But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Reflection

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, a season when we journey towards our celebration of the birth of Jesus as Christ-mas and think about those who were also preparing for the coming of Jesus into our world.

In the Christmas story, we are made acutely aware that there was no room for Joseph and Mary to rest when they arrived in Bethlehem, in the more traditional places reserved for

hospitality in Jewish culture. This meant they had to use other spaces which were available.

Jesus' birth into our world changed everything and it made room for us in God's Kingdom. This year the Methodist Church is encouraging us to reflect on how open, inclusive and welcoming God is, and on the truth that in God's kingdom, as hopefully also in our churches, we can say to all people, 'There is Room' for you.

As we shall be reflecting in the coming weeks, the Christmas story is full of characters who found themselves on the edge of things for lots of reasons.

And in our society today too, many people may be feeling as if they are on the edge of things too. Some people don't consider themselves to be religious and don't see what relevance Christmas has for them.

Many people will be struggling with the cost-of-living crisis and wondering how they are going to manage in the coming weeks and months. Or they may be worried about people close to them who they know are struggling.

In our society where the gap between the rich and the poor is growing wider we may be anxious about those who are feeling on the edge of things, unable to afford to give gifts or celebrate Christmas as they see others doing.

Young people may be feeling pressured to conform to others' ideas of what looks good; they may feel patronised and disregarded, or anxious about what the future holds for them.

Middle aged people may be feeling the stress and pressure of trying to meet all the different demands on their time and resources that the different roles they hold place on them, as parents, children, grandparents, workers.

Older people may be feeling ignored or lonely or perhaps worried about how they will manage in the colder months.

And further afield in our world we know there are people facing violence, conflict, poverty, natural and manmade disasters and rejection.

But the wonderful news we have to share is that the Bethlehem stable has room for all people, including you and including me. Every single person is part of this story.

God wants all of us to take our place in his kingdom and receive his love, wholeness and peace.

You may like to take a moment to ponder some of these questions:
How does knowing that there is room for you in God's story make you feel?
Why do you think God wants all people to come together?
What does it mean in an increasingly divided world to turn swords into ploughshares?
Do you feel that there is room for you in God's story?

Perhaps as you look at the lit candle you might like to take some time to reflect on what your answers to these questions might be.
You may find it helpful to imagine sitting next to Jesus and talking to him, as you would a good friend, about how you feel about these things.
Perhaps you can also take time to be open to allowing him to speak to you too, in the quietness.

Hymn STF 173 Into the darkness of this world (Come Lord Jesus Come)

Into the darkness of this world,
Into the shadows of the night;
Into this loveless place You came,
Lightened our burdens, eased our pain,
And made these hearts Your home.
Into the darkness once again –
Oh come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come with Your love
To make us whole,
Come with Your light
To lead us on,
Driving the darkness
Far from our souls:
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Into the longing of our souls,
Into these heavy hearts of stone,
Shine on us now Your piercing light,
Order our lives and souls aright,
By grace and love unknown,
Until in You our hearts unite –
Oh come, Lord Jesus, come.

O Holy Child, Emmanuel,
Hope of the ages, God with us,
Visit again this broken place,
Till all the earth declares Your praise

And Your great mercies own.
Now let Your love be born in us,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

(Last Chorus)
*Come in Your glory,
Take Your place,
Jesus, the Name above all names,
We long to see You face to face,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Maggi Dawn © 1993 Kingsway's Thankyou Music.

Prayers of thanks & for others

Great and generous God we thank you,
That You have loved us from the beginning of time, and you remember us in times of trouble and of joy.

Thank you for coming to us in Jesus Christ, who has redeemed the world and saves us from our sins.

Thank you for sending your Holy Spirit, who comforts us and leads us into your truth.

God the potter, we are clay made by your hands, You formed us, urging us into life, handling us with such care & love.

We place ourselves in your hands: with all our joys and our sorrows, our fears and our failures.

We place ourselves in your hands: for re-shaping and renewal, for re-moulding and re-use.

We offer ourselves to you, seeking to be filled with your Advent hope.

As we enter this season of Advent, Lord,
A time of waiting and hoping and preparing,
We pray for all those who are waiting and hoping;
Those who wait and hope for justice and a fair wage;
Those who wait and hope for peace and an end to violence....
Those who wait and hope for food, a decent bed, a home to call their own....
Those who wait and hope for an end to pain and suffering.....
Those who wait and hope for forgiveness and reconciliation.....
Those who wait and hope for healing of body or mind or spirit.....
We pray for those known to us personally, whose needs are on our hearts this morning.....

Break in with your transforming power Lord;

Soften hearts that have become hardened and fill them with a desire for justice and a fair sharing of the worlds' resources for all people.
Draw near with your healing love, Lord,
And bring the peace that only you can give

Through the power of your Holy Spirit shape us and renew us,
Show us how to be your hands, your feet, your mouthpiece,
Sharing your grace, mercy and love to all those we encounter each day
Help us to find ways in the coming days to share the good news we have that there is room for everyone, in the stable, and in your kingdom of love and peace.
We ask in the name of Jesus, as we say the prayer he taught us:
The Lord's Prayer:
Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name;
Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us;
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
For Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn STF 188 There's a light upon the mountains

There's a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring
When our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King;
Weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed so long;
But his triumph-day is breaking, and we hail it with a song.

There's a hush of expectation, and a quiet in the air;
And the breath of God is moving in the fervent breath of prayer;
For the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ upon the throne,
And the travail of our spirit is the travail of his own.

He is breaking down the barriers, he is casting up the way;
He is calling for his angels to build up the gates of day:

But his angels here are human, not the shining hosts above;
For the drum-beats of his army are the heart-beats of our love.

Hark! We hear the distant music, and it comes with fuller swell;
'Tis the triumph-song of Jesus, of our King, Immanuel:
Zion, go ye forth to meet him; and my soul be swift to bring
All thy finest and thy noblest for the triumph of our King!

Henry Burton (1840-1930)

Blessing

God of the waiting ones
And the watching ones
Help us to recognise the signs of your coming kingdom
May we go in peace, and be filled with hope;
may the love of Jesus move in us
And may we be empowered by the Holy Spirit to share the good news of your grace and your welcome for everyone,
With all those we meet as we journey through this Advent season.

Amen

*Rev Jane Wilson
November 2022*

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