



This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

We hope that services will be held in some of our churches on 3rd January 2021, but regulations may change. Please look out for information from the church you normally attend.

Hymn: Light of the World StF. 175

[Light of the World \(Here I am to Worship\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

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

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God

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

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God

You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

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

Tim Hughes

Prayer

Gentle, nurturing God,
Breathe your still calm voice
into this time and this space.
Enfold us in your loving embrace
as we share in this,
your holy fellowship.
In the name of Jesus, born amongst us.

Amen.

Hymn: Hark the Herald Angels Sing. StF 202

[Hark the Herald Angels Sing - Bradford Cathedral Choir.mp4 \(dropbox.com\)](#)

Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn 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 newborn 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 man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son 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

Let us pray together.

God of life and light
who came and lived amongst us,
Christ made man, son of Mary.
who grew from child of hope to Man of God
We praise your holy name.

God of forgiveness and grace,
We ask your healing forgiveness for all that does
not honour and serve your love,
and trust in your unchanging promise:
We give thanks that you forgive our sins.

God of time and patience
whose eternal spirit reaches out to us
and brings time to pause, to wait,
for your still small voice of calm
Holy Spirit, our great companion.
move amongst us
and reveal your kingdom
in this time and this place.
In the name of God, our creator, redeemer, and
sustainer. **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 61:10–62:3

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of
salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of
righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring
up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.
^{62:1} For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.
² The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will give.
³ You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the
Lord,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:22–40

When the time came for their purification according
to the law of Moses, they brought him up to
Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is
written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male
shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), ²⁴and they
offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the
law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young
pigeons.'

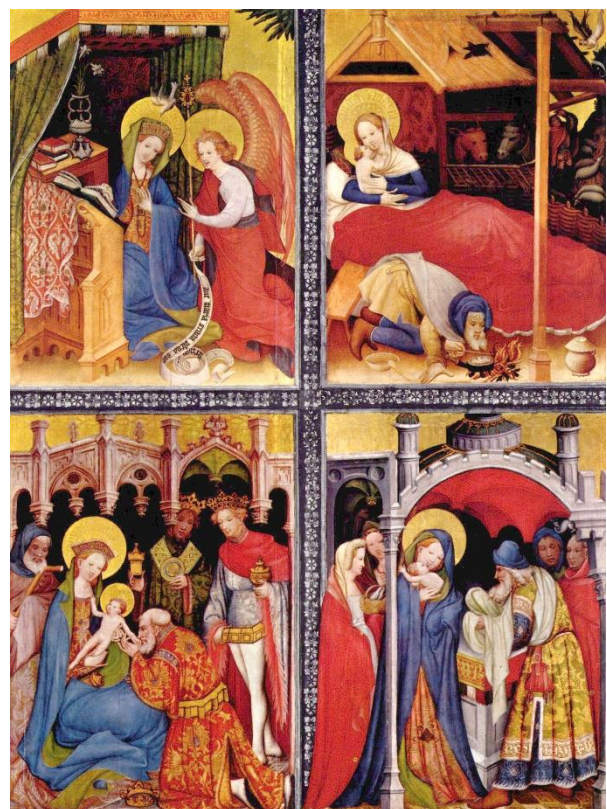
²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name
was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout,
looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the
Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to
him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death
before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by
the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when
the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him
what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took
him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in
peace,
according to your word;
³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all
peoples,
³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

³³ And the child's father and mother were amazed
at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon
blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This
child is destined for the falling and the rising of
many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed
³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be
revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul
too.'

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of
Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great
age, having lived with her husband for seven years
after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of
eighty-four. She never left the temple but
worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and
day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to
praise God and to speak about the child to all who
were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When they had finished everything required by
the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to
their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and
became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour
of God was upon him.



Hymn: Hail to the Lord's Anointed. StF 228

[Hail to the Lord's Anointed \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

Hail to the Lord's anointed
Great David's greater Son.
Hail in the time appointed
His reign on earth begun
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression
And rule in equity.

He comes with succour speedy
To those who suffer wrong,
To help the poor and needy
and bid the weak be strong.
To give them songs for sighing
Their darkness turn to light
Whose souls, condemned and dying
Were precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth
And love, joy, hope, like flowers
Spring in his path to birth.
Before him, on the mountains
Shall peace, the herald, go
And righteousness, in fountains
From hill to valley flow.

Kings shall fall down before him
And gold and incense bring.
All nations shall adore him
His praise all people sing.
To him shall prayer unceasing
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing
A kingdom without end.

O'er every foe victorious
He on his throne shall rest;
From age to age more glorious
All blessing and all-blessed.
The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove.
His Name shall stand forever
his changeless name of Love.

James Montgomery

Reflection

We discover a lot about Jesus' parents in this short passage. They were faithful to their Jewish traditions so made the journey to the temple to have Jesus circumcised. A young mother who had recently given birth had been journeying for several days from Nazareth, to Bethlehem and then to Jerusalem. She must have been

exhausted as she approached the grandeur of the Temple. It is not hard to imagine them talking about the way in which his birth has come about and all the signs and symbols that accompanied his arrival into the world.

These parents did not have much money, so they could not afford the lamb that was the normal sacrifice, instead they claimed the concession made in the Law for the poor and offered two pigeons or turtle-doves.

A daily routine affair in the life of the busy temple takes an unexpected turn. An elderly man and woman appear on the scene and take over. They had both been waiting a long time for this moment. The Holy Spirit had revealed to them that this child and their parents were special.

There is something important about the way they welcome and respect this exhausted couple. Without a moment's hesitation they get alongside them and they affirm them and their son. There is not the slightest doubt that this poor, tired family is going to be the instrument through which God brings salvation to the world.

Being open to the Spirit means that we must turn inside out so many of our expectations. Of course, we must reach out with compassion to those who are weak and vulnerable and many of our churches are good at doing this. We also need to be just as good at getting alongside people and listening to their stories, because in doing that we might discover God reaching out to us.

Jesus brings hope to the world because of the way he gets alongside people rather than the things he does for people.

So, these elders in the community, with all their prayerful patience and wisdom honour the child and his parents. In this struggling family they can not only see potential, but much more. They recognise the child for who he is.

Simeon offers thanksgiving to God and speaks a word of prophesy to the parents. Before his rising there will be a falling. That is the way God turns things inside out: there will be death before resurrection so a sword will pierce Mary's soul.

Anna talks of the hopes of all who are looking to be set free. She recognises that these hopes are tied up in the child.

So much hope and expectation is invested in this young couple who are entrusted with nurturing the Saviour of the world to maturity.

That is the way with God, who chooses the seemingly insignificant people to get caught up in achieving his purposes.

Take a time to sit quietly



During this season the Methodist Church is proclaiming "God is with us". God is with us is more than a statement. It's a reminder that God

is always with us. We are encouraged to share our story (and other people's stories) of walking with God in this extraordinary year. How might you share how God has been with you this week? Find out more here

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/christmas/>

A time of prayer

Enduring, eternal God, of Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Joseph, who left all behind them to follow you. We ask for your strength and guidance to follow in their footsteps.

Powerful, transforming God, of Isaiah and Ezekiel, Micah and Amos, who spoke of you in their time and their place, we ask for your powerful words and actions in places of need today.

Creating, unsettling God, of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for your arrival, help us to continue to prepare your way and equip us in your service.

Parenting, nurturing, God, of Mary and Joseph, we think of our families, those we choose and those chosen for us, We call them to mind: bring us into your warm embrace so that no matter how near or far we know your love reaches out to us all.

Patient, hope-filled God, of Simeon and Anna we give thanks for those whose testimony, and fellowship to you crosses generations. We pray for your church, trusting that as we watch and wait, work and pray, we can bear witness to the love of God, the light of Christ and the wisdom of the Spirit. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Of the Father's Love Begotten. StF 181

[Of the Father's Love Begotten \[with lyrics for congregations - YouTube\]](#)

Of the Father's love begotten
when the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega,
he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see:
Evermore and evermore.

By his word was all created;
he commanded; it was done!
Earth and sky and boundless ocean,
universe of three in one,
all that sees the moon's soft radiance,
all that breathes beneath the sun.
Evermore and evermore.

This is he whom saints in old time,
Chanted of with one accord,
whom the voices of the prophets
promised in their faithful word:
now he shines, the long-expected;
let creation praise its Lord.
Evermore and evermore.

O you heights of heaven adore him;
angel hosts, his praises sing;
all dominions bow before him,
and extol our God and King;
let no tongue on Earth be silent,
every voice in concert sing.
Evermore and evermore.

Aurelius Clemens Prudentius

Translated by John Mason Neale and Henry Williams Baker

A prayer of blessing

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:
your word has been fulfilled.
My own eyes have seen the salvation
which you prepared in the sight of every people;
A light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel.
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be forever. **Amen.**

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