

## Worship at Home – 29th December 2024 (1st Sunday of Christmas)

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Revd Claire Simpson.

### Introduction

It is good to be leading this service on the last Sunday of 2024. It's Revd Claire Simpson here, the minister in the Basingstoke area of the Circuit. I hope that you are still enjoying the Christmas season and looking forward to the new year.

### Call to worship

We welcome lots of things at Christmas. **We welcome you, Jesus.**

We welcome family and friends. **We welcome you, Jesus.**

We welcome the gifts and the good things. **We welcome you, Jesus.**

We know that you, Lord, welcome us into your family. **We welcome you, Jesus.**

This Christmas **we welcome you, Jesus.**

Every day, **we welcome you, Jesus. Amen.**

### Hymn – STF 205 – It came upon the midnight clear Edmund H Sears (1810-1876)

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|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | It came upon the midnight clear,<br>that glorious song of old,<br>from angels bending near the earth<br>to touch their harps of gold:<br>'Peace on the earth, good will to men,<br>from heaven's all-gracious King!<br>The world in solemn stillness lay<br>to hear the angels sing.      | 2 | Still through the cloven skies they come,<br>with peaceful wings unfurled;<br>and still their heavenly music floats<br>o'er all the weary world;<br>above its sad and lowly plains<br>they bend on hovering wing;<br>and ever o'er its Babel sounds<br>the blessed angels sing.            |
| 3 | Yet with the woes of sin and strife<br>the world has suffered long;<br>beneath the angel strain have rolled<br>two thousand years of wrong;<br>and man, at war with man, hears not<br>the love-song which they bring.<br>O hush the noise, ye men of strife,<br>and hear the angels sing! | 4 | For lo, the days are hastening on,<br>to prophets shown of old,<br>when with the ever-circling years<br>shall come the time foretold,<br>when the new heaven and earth shall<br>own,<br>the Prince of Peace their King,<br>and all the world repeat the song<br>which now the angels sing. |

### Opening prayers

Jesus, child of the crib,  
with Mary, who gave birth to you,  
with the innkeeper, who found a stable for you,  
with Joseph, who protected you,  
with the animals of the stable, who watched over you,  
with the angels, who sang of you,  
with the shepherds, who ran to you,  
with our brothers and sisters throughout the world,  
we welcome you this Christmas, Jesus, Saviour of the world, light in our darkness.  
We welcome you. **Amen**

## **A prayer of confession and assurance of forgiveness**

If we have been slow to make our way to Bethlehem:

**Lord Jesus, forgive us and be born in us today.**

If we didn't notice others who were struggling on their journey:

**Lord Jesus, forgive us and be born in us today.**

If we have forgotten the lonely and thought only of our own feasts:

**Lord Jesus, forgive us and be born in us today.**

**Where regret is real, God pronounces pardon and we can begin again.**

As we kneel before your crib,

with angels and shepherds, with Mary and Joseph, with sheep and oxen:

assure us of your mercy and loving kindness

**Lord Jesus, be born in us today. Amen**

## **Bible reading – Luke 2: 8-20**

<sup>8</sup> There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said,

<sup>14</sup> “May glory be given to God in the highest heaven!

And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!”

<sup>15</sup> The angels left and went into heaven. Then the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem. Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby. The baby was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After the shepherds had seen him, they told everyone. They reported what the angel had said about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things like a secret treasure in her heart. She thought about them over and over. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned. They gave glory and praise to God. Everything they had seen and heard was just as they had been told.

## Hymn – STF 206 – It was on a starry night Joy Webb (b. 1932)

- 1 It was on a starry night when the hills were bright,  
earth lay sleeping, sleeping calm and still;  
then in a cattle shed, in a manger bed,  
a boy was born, King of all the world.  
*And all the angels sang for him,  
the bells of heaven rang for him;  
for a boy was born, King of all the world.  
And all the angels sang for him,  
the bells of heaven rang for him;  
for a boy was born, King of all the world*
- 2 Soon the shepherds came that way, where the baby lay,  
and were kneeling, kneeling by his side,  
And their hearts believed again, For the peace of men;  
For a boy was born, King of all the world.  
*And all the angels sang for him,  
the bells of heaven rang for him;  
for a boy was born, King of all the world.  
And all the angels sang for him,  
the bells of heaven rang for him;  
for a boy was born, King of all the world*

### Reflection on the reading

How good is your hearing? Maybe you can hear well? Maybe you wear hearing aids which means that you can hear well? Or maybe, as you've become more mature in years you feel that your hearing is not so good, even with some extra help. In later life, my dad struggled with his hearing and needed to wear hearing aids. He didn't find it easy to wear them and, at times, he found that lots of noise and chatter could become quite distorted. So much so, that at family get-togethers when the four young boy grandchildren were in attendance, my dad would ceremonially take out both hearing aids and lay them on the table because the noise in the house would be a bit too much for him! On a more serious note, I know that a common problem for those with hearing difficulties is the amount of background noise that might be going on when trying to focus on an individual conversation or voice.

This year the Methodist Church's Christmas campaign has been called 'Hush the Noise'. A phrase which is at the end of the carol we sang at the start of our service. The following explanation says: 'Christmas is loud, isn't it? So much expectation. So many voices. Telling us how to celebrate, what to wear, what to eat and drink, what to watch and what to buy. Instead, this Christmas we're inviting everyone to hush the noise. To listen for the love song that the angels bring, this and every year. They sang it for the first time more than 2,000 years ago, on the midnight clear. They're just waiting for us to join in.'

As we reflect on the Christmas story and the visit of the shepherds to the Christchild, they are examples of how to hear the 'love song the angels bring'. In many ways their lifestyle is materially poor but time rich. Out on the hillside in the quiet of the night they were in a place where they were able to hear the angel's message (frightening though it was at first!) and respond to the prompting to go and find the baby Jesus. They were not disappointed, and they shared their joy with others. Mary is also another example of how to ponder on the things of God amidst the noise of the situation she found herself in.

So as 2024 draws to a close and 2025 begins, may we take the message of the good news of Christmas into the new year. May we continue to find time, long after the Christmas decorations have been put away and all the turkey eaten, to hush the noise that is all around us and spend time in the presence of God listening and hearing the message that God wants to bring to us where we are. I wish you all a happy and peaceful new year.

### **Prayers for the world, others and ourselves**

All over the world, this is a time of celebration, rejoicing and feasting.  
Yet we remember today, amidst all the joy, those whose hearts are heavy.

We pray for those who are not celebrating today  
because they have lost touch with their families,  
those who wish it could be different, but first steps towards reconciliation are difficult.

We pray for who are on their own this Christmas, with just memories to keep them company; those whose families seem incomplete, their contemporaries diminishing year by year.

We pray for those who have lost a child, and whose memories of loss are heightened by this season's focus on happy children and family celebration.

We pray for those who are in prison, trying to make the best of it,  
and their families, who feel the punishment of waiting.

We pray for those who are far away in war zones, keeping an uneasy watch,  
and those who wait at home, with anxious hearts.

We pray for those who are in homeless shelters, off the streets for a few days,  
given a feast by the goodwill of others.

We pray for all those people around the world who can only dream of feasts  
and what it is like to feel full.

God whose name is love; you came to turn the world upside down.  
May we help you in that task, whatever that may mean for us. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

So, as we begin another year in this coming week, we come to our final hymn.

**Hymn – STF 476 – One more step along the world I go** Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

1 One more step along the world I go,  
One more step along the world I go.  
From the old things to the new  
Keep me travelling along with you.  
*And it's from the old I travel to the new.*  
*Keep me travelling along with you.*

2 Round the corners of the world I turn,  
More and more about the world I learn.  
All the new things that I see  
You'll be looking at along with me.  
*Chorus*

3 As I travel through the bad and good  
Keep me travelling the way I should.  
Where I see no way to go  
You'll be telling me the way, I know.  
*Chorus*

4 Give me courage when the world is rough,  
Keep me loving though the world is tough.  
Leap and sing in all I do,  
Keep me travelling along with you.  
*Chorus*

5 You are older than the world can be,  
You are younger than the life in me.  
Ever old and ever new,  
Keep me travelling along with you.  
*Chorus*

**Closing Words and Blessing**

As we approach a new year, go beyond the comfort of what you know to explore and discover new things.

Don't be afraid of change; of seeing things differently,  
because God travels with you. Go. And God will go with you. **Amen**

And the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and all those who  
you know and love, today and as we journey into another year. **Amen**

Bible readings from [New International Reader's Version \(NIRV\)](#)

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