

Teddington Circuit Worship Sheets

Sunday 20th December 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. With thanks to Mark Gilks and the Connexional team for their contributions.

Opening Prayer (adapted from material provided by Christian Aid for Advent)

Even if we cannot physically gather:

God is with us

Even if Christmas celebrations are different:

God is with us

Even if we might not be able to hug family and friends: God is with us

Even if we cannot sing carols in church buildings: God is with us

Even if Christmas cheer is harder this year:

God is with us

Emmanuel, God with us, we come before you in worship and praise. We remember that you are ever faithful, eternally loving, and mysteriously present always. Amen

Hymn: Tell out my soul (Singing the Faith 186)

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqwoqRo9N6E>

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same;
his holy name -- the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926)

Let us pray together:

Emmanuel, God with us,
we rejoice in your faithful and eternally loving nature,
as we remember the events surrounding the birth of
Jesus, your Son.

Like Mary, we want to rejoice and sing of your love for
all creation. From mountain tops and ocean depths,
we want all creation to hear the amazing story of your
unfathomable generosity and grace.

We give thanks that you cannot be contained, boxed
in, or trapped by us for our selfish purposes. You need
to be free to be among your people in every situation
we face.

To accept your call on our lives is dangerous, risky but
above all transformative and life-giving. This morning
we rejoice in the knowledge of your love.

Forgive us for the times we have obstructed your
message, deliberately or unknowingly.

We hear Christ's gracious word: 'Your sins are
forgiven. Amen. Thanks be to God.'

Today's Reading from the Old Testament: 2 Samuel
7:1-11, 16

Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Time to Reflect

The next time that you are shopping in Kingston and
you find yourself in the Market Square, take ten
minutes out to make this discovery. Go down to the
bottom end of the Market Square, away from the
shops in Clarence Street and you will see a semi-
circular building called the Guildhall. If you then look
to the right of the Guildhall, by the side of the
Hogsmill river, is an enclosure made of stone and iron,
it contains the Coronation Stone.

Legend has it that seven Saxon Kings were crowned
whilst sitting on this stone. One of them was
Athelstan, who has a reasonable claim to be called the
first King of the English.

When the Queen visited Kingston a few years ago one
of the places she saw was the Coronation Stone. She
was extremely interested in the Stone, which is not

surprising as she was crowned on the only other Coronation Stone in the country. In all the Queen spent about five hours in Kingston that day, yet the planning for the visit took two years! You can imagine the desire of so many important local people who wanted to be presented to the Queen and have lunch with her. I think the polite term is jostling for position. This frenzy must happen whenever there's a royal visit. So, you would think that a royal visit involving the Mother of the King of Kings would have similar pomp, ceremony and dozens of important people clamoring to be involved.

But it wasn't like that at all.

The event is known as the Annunciation, which means announcement, you will find it described in Luke 1: 26-38, and it's when the angel Gabriel visits Mary. Gabriel has seen service in the Old Testament book of Daniel but is probably best known for his visits to Mary, Joseph and John the Baptist's Dad, Zechariah. But it's Mary we think of today.

There's plenty of paintings of the Annunciation. Most of us will have seen one's like Fra Angelica's Annunciation on Christmas cards. But if you want to get a better grasp of the message of that famous visit do try to look up the Annunciation by John Collier. Collier paints a very modern looking 14-year-old girl as Mary, which could well have been the real Mary's age at the time.

Funnily enough in Protestant Churches we don't talk much about Mary.

However, on the fourth Sunday in Advent as we light her candle, perhaps we can feel it's safe to do so. Our Catholic brothers and sisters have no such problem. You will find that Mary is often described as the model Christian believer, the unblemished representative of the Church. She is for many the Queen of Heaven, the Theotokos- the Mother of God, the God bearer.

On this Advent Sunday let's accept that everyone can see her differently, just as they need to see her. The anti- feminists hold her up as a model of the obedient woman. While Feminists champion her as the strong woman who needed not a man in her life to bear Jesus. There will also be many who would minimize her and treat her like a delicate nativity figure that is easily broken and boxed away for most of the year. The crunch point in the Annunciation is that Gabriel announces to Mary that through her God is breaking into the world, to restore, reveal and to redeem its mess. God chooses a young teenage girl to start his gospel of justice and peace.

This is the amazing way that our God works. God chooses Mary because she has, in the worldly sense, nothing. She is a poor, young girl in a society that

values men and maturity. She lives a totally unassuming life in an out-of-the-way place.

This is the point by which the Gospel extends the message. That call, that announcement, it not just for Mary, it's for us.

Every single one of us has received an invitation to help give birth to the Kingdom of God.

God is asking us and our Church family to give birth to the Holy.

Are we saying "yes" to God's intrusive invitations?

Are we saying "yes" to new horizons, new possibilities, and new lives?

We know that Mary responded, "Let it be with me according to your will".

Let's say as Isaiah did "Here am I", and if others in our Church family are saying "yes", let us be their Elizabeth.

Mary led the way. She said "yes". She gave voice to Christ's vision. She followed. Now, it's our turn. Let's do likewise.

Remember: Nothing, nothing is impossible with God.

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

God of light and love,
you entered our world bringing hope and healing to the nations. The world today needs to hear your message of healing and reconciliation.

We remember the nations of the world where there is enmity, distrust of one another, and bloodshed.
May your message of peace be made real.

We remember those who have no home to call their own, those living on the streets or in refugee camps.
May your message of justice for all be heeded.

We remember those whose lives have been affected by Covid-19: through the death of loved ones, long-term health difficulties, loss of income.
May your message of hope be heard.

We remember those who live in poverty, those who live in fear, those who are anxious, those for whom

Christmas means isolation and loneliness.
Encourage and equip us to be your messengers,
offering words and deeds that bring comfort and relief
in the name of Christ. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to Garth Hewitt sing:

Light a Candle in the darkness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0agQyxTVwY>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit'.

(Romans 15: 13)

Original Materials by [Revd Deborah Cornish](#)

All

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Local Churches please insert CCCLi No here

The Big Church Sing Christmas Special was broadcast live on the Methodist Church's YouTube channel on Sunday 29 November. Have you seen it yet? If you have access to the internet go to

<https://www.youtube.com/methodistchurch>