



Heaton Moor United Church

The United Reformed Church and The Methodist Church
working together in partnership



Church Services

Sunday 6th December 10.45 Heaton Moor United Church

Rev. Dr Raj Patta

Duty 1 : Ian S Duty 2: Mark F

Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 6th December Circuit Service 3:00pm service

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881

Passcode: 974333

Wednesday 9th December Coffee and Prayer 11:00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95327541668?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWTBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668

Passcode: 794265

Wednesday 9th December Advent Bible Study

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88415953758?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 884 1595 3758

Passcode: 593070

Joining by telephone

Step 1)

Dial any of the following numbers. If one doesn't work try another and another until you are able to connect:

0330 088 5830

0131 460 1196

0203 481 5237

0203 481 5240

0208 080 6591

0208 080 6592

Step 2)

Follow the prompts you hear on the phone.

You may be prompted to enter 3 different things:

1 -- Meeting ID followed by hash #

2 -- Password followed by hash #

3 -- Participants ID -- You will not have one of these, don't worry, all you need to do is enter "Hash" #

You should then be entered into the service.

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

Advent seasons' greetings to you all.

Hope you are doing well. We heard some good news this week that the vaccine will be rolled out in UK from next week, administering first to the most vulnerable ones. We will continue to pray that the vaccine will be accessible and available to all people in the world. We also thank God for all those researchers who have worked hard in bringing out the vaccine.

Starting this Sunday, the 6th of December, we will resume our worship services at our church building, complying to the risk assessments. Kindly contact the church office for more details about booking in a place to attend. We will continue to post a video reflection every Sunday on our church YouTube channel for those who cannot make it to the service at the church. Our circuit zoom services will also continue to happen at 3pm every Sunday.

Many thanks to people who have joined at our service for Loving Remembrance on Wednesday and special thanks to Deborah for taking the lead in organising it. Our weekly Advent Bible study has begun on Zoom every Wednesday at 7pm and thanks to people who joined at the first study.

Next week on the 10th of December at 7pm the circuit is hosting a virtual pilgrimage to Bethlehem on Zoom, and you are all kindly invited to join this event. The link to book your tickets is attached, and we appreciate your support and solidarity to this event and cause.

Thanks to Sharon for sending us all the Christmas pack from our Church, which was appreciated by many people in the Church. Thanks to JoAnne for organising Jesus the light trail, which I understood was participated by many families in our neighbourhood. On the 11th of December we will be at our local school with a food pantry, giving away food to children and their families.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection for this Sunday for your kind perusal.

Let us continue to uphold each other in our prayers and I am really hoping that it will not be too long for us all to meet again at our Church, when all this virus is gone.

May the grace and peace of God be with you all.

Thanking you,

Regards,
Raj
4th December 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR

When I wrote last week that we were in the fast lane to Christmas I didn't realise how true that was - I can't believe it's Friday again!

I completed my final walk of the Light Trail on Saturday as me and my little man took it down - I'm sad to see it go as it has been a wonderful excuse to get away from my desk and interact with members of the community. Further on in the notices I have shared some photos and comments I received from people who took part.

I am in the process of working out the logistics for A Trail of the Year - a prayer space trail for individuals to wander through in this busy season and reflect. There will be another family trail, this time jointly with Heaton Mersey Methodist Church on 19th December and details will be in the next newsletter.

I hope you are enjoying your ADVENTure -do share with us how you are getting on we'd love to know.

If you have anything you would like included in the weekly notice's please let me know. As always if you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me.

JoAnne

community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

07340 269 354

www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk



Heaton Moor United Church



Heaton Moor United Church



heaton_moor_united_church



Greater Manchester remains in Tier 3 restrictions and will be reviewed on 16th December. Please continue to follow the guidelines and stay safe. As we return to tier 3 restriction the Church will re-open for services. If you have not already done so please use the following link to book in for Worship, if you have any problems please contact Sharon

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdAWGZmTfE21O1dQnXIPjVLrv6e6AnT1mi7O539wPxuSRx0gA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0&qxids=7628>

Service of Loving Remembrance

The Service of Loving Remembrance which was held on Wednesday is now on our YouTube channel. Please share the link with anyone you feel may benefit from this service

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbU1kA5Blhg>



SUPER SUNDAY

At Super Sunday this week we will be thinking about Christmas – come prepared to “make a stable” – whether using lego, junk or furniture! The team look forward to seeing you at 10:00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88584841584?pwd=aVVYMzRxenFUcmFjazFXb3RxOVFsQT09>

Zoom ID 885 8484 1584

Passcode y5A5nA

Passcode 870454 (phone users)



We still have some masks to sell to raise funds for our School Pantry Project supporting Mersey Vale School. The masks have been made by Raj's friend Tabitha and are £4 each. If you would like to purchase please contact Sharon in the office.

Lilly received an amazing response, selling all the candles she has and raising £120 in the process! Thank You to everyone who has ordered.



The Speaker of the House of Commons
and the Lord Speaker invite you to a:

Virtual Parliamentary Carol Service

on Tuesday 15th December
from 5.00–5.45pm

If you are interested in joining the above event please register here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/virtual-parliamentary-carol-service-tickets-129666884141>

FAMILY LIGHT TRAIL

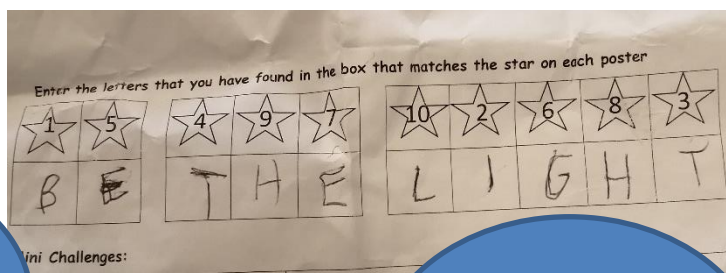
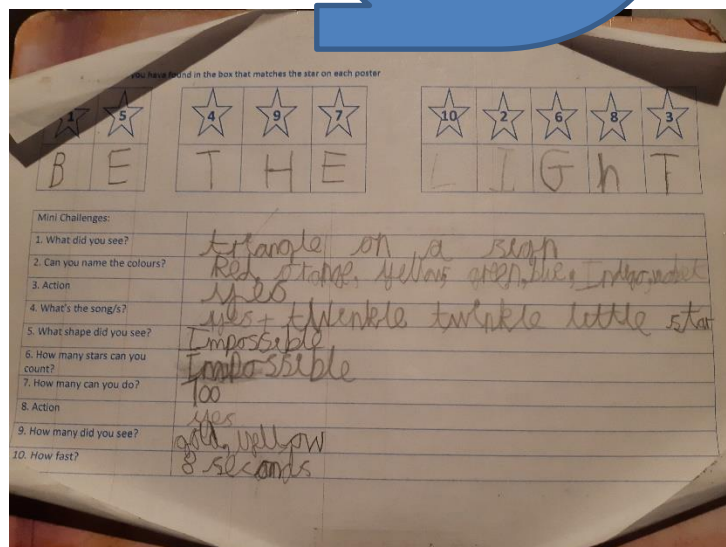
Thank you for the
star glasses my
daughter won't
take them off



Thank You for
organising a great way
to spend time out of
the house, we've done
it twice now



Thank you for the
goodie bags my boys
loved the dot to dot
constellations



My favourite bit was
doing the star jumps
- I can do 10

Advent Study – Peace, Panic and Pandemic Week 1

This week was our first of four Advent bible studies and as usual Raj gave us lots to think about. Below is the text that we looked at and the questions that we discussed in small groups. You don't have to have attended this first session to take part – please see information on the header sheet for zoom log in details.

Week one – Isaiah 11 – The Vision of a Peaceful Kingdom

2020 a pandemic year – filled with fear, anxiety, panic, grief, death – exposing that Coronavirus is not a leveller – with divisions seen visibly across the globe – Inequality has been ever increasing – widening the gap between the rich and the poor -

In such a context – “peace on earth and goodwill to all creation” comes as a sign of hope for this our context today

Isaiah 11 is a vision of peace with an interdependence of God with the humanity, the animals and the creation, in the context of austerity in the rule of king Ahaz in the Southern kingdom of Judea, just before the invasion of Assyrians.

1. Peace emerges from within the community: (1v)

The vision of a new tree and a new hope – shooting from the stump of Jesse is in contrast to the cutting down of the Assyrian tree as mentioned in 10: 17-18, 33-34)

The Hebrew word ‘shoot’ also means ‘rod’ or ‘sceptre’ – awaiting a new rule A branch shall grow out of his roots – flourishing takes place not in a new place but from among them

A peaceful kingdom will emerge from among them and with them – in this case Jesse Incarnation as inter-carnation

2. Peace originates from the Spirit of God: (2v)

Sevenfold characters – the spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord (2v)

3. Peace always co-exist with justice: (3-5v)

Non-judgemental, justice for the poor, equity for the meek and lowly, injustice will not be tolerated – An alternative king with righteousness as his belt and faithfulness as the belt for his lions

4. Peace at its radical heights: (6-9v)

A shift from a tree to a pasture

- Peace among the humanity and the rest of the creation, here it is with animals
- Peace among the wild and the mild (the wolf and the lamb living together)
- Peace among genders (strong animals are used in masculine gender in Hebrew and the weak as feminine gender)
- Peace – the powerful giving up their privilege and joining in solidarity with the powerless – the lion and the ox eating grass together
- Peace – the margins giving leadership – the little child shall lead them
- Peace – new play – child playing snakes and (l)adders – no hurt and no destruction

5. Peace permeates the boundaries: (9v)

“...the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

There will not be a place that is devoid of peace – Injustice anywhere affects justice everywhere – peace transcends boundaries and is for all and with all.

Questions for our discussion:

1. What do you understand about God from this text? How do we understand Christian discipleship from it?
2. What steps could we take as a church in moving towards this vision of peace?

@rajpatta 2/12/20

ADVENT PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

with Greater Manchester South & Cheshire URC

Advent Retreat

28th November 10:30 – 12:00 and repeated at 14:30 – 16:00



Weariness & Wonder

Wednesday 2nd, 9th, and 16th December at 19:30

Meeting ID: 862 4634 9125 Passcode: 024468

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86246349125?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Advent Bible Study

Monday 30th November 7th, 14th and 21st December at 10:00

Meeting ID: 893 0699 8422 Passcode: 935820

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89306998422?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Messy Christmas Family & Children's Event

20th December at 15:00

Meeting ID: 870 8539 9030 Passcode: 599369

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87085399030?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Scratch Carol Service

20th December at 18:30

Meeting ID: 862 4634 9125 Passcode: 024468

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86246349125?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Christmas Eve Communion

24th December at 11:30

Meeting ID: 824 7647 3548 Passcode: 528678

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82476473548?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Christmas Day Service

25th December at 9:00

Meeting ID: 871 5576 3393 Passcode: 751659

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87155763393?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

For venues and zoom links please contact Dave Fraser at

davefraser24@gmail.com



DATED EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

6th December – Super Sunday 10:00

Get ready to think about Christmas and make a stable

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88584841584?pwd=aVVYMzRxenFUcmFjazFXb3RxOVFsQT09>

Zoom ID 885 8484 1584

Passcode y5A5nA

Passcode 870454 (phone users)

9th December – Bible Study Group 19:00

Peace, Panic and Pandemic : Advent Bible Study Group

Zoom details on header sheet

10th December – Virtual Trip to Bethlehem 19:00

Would you like to see what Bethlehem looks like today? To join this virtual tour you can purchase tickets from the website www.heatonmoorunited.church.org.uk

16th December – More than a Good Book 10:00

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86886449976?pwd=R3ZSeFQ4U1crMXRTNHBUakxGYldjQT09>

Zoom ID 868 8644 9976

Passcode 714757

19th December – Carols in the car

Go to www.carolsinthecar.co.uk to purchase tickets and further information

24th December – Circuit Christingle Service 15:00

This year this service will be held over zoom, further details to follow

30th December – Topsy Turvy Coffee Evening 19:00

Happy End of Year Celebrations – come and join the party!

Contact JoAnne if you'd like to attend





Prayers from Linda

Jobs

God, we pray for all those who have suddenly lost their jobs this year. we ask you to first give us peace and confidence. We feel shocked and fearful for the future, and have questioned our abilities, give us your encouragement love and strength. Send your Holy Spirit to us and through other people who will be able to help. Remind us of past victories and awaken new dreams for our future. Give us the people who maybe the key to open a new future for us. Give us hope and lighten our step, lift the worries from our minds. Give us rest and give us peace. God, you give us a purpose for our lives. We are not made to hang around. We need to work for are family's. So for all who have lost their jobs please bring us one step closer to a new direction. Show us anything we may need to do in order for help our destiny to be realized. Then give us wisdom and power to make those changes by your Holy Spirit. Today you give us a new day with new possibilities. Let this be the first day to start a new life. Without your help, we cannot take our next step. We ask all this in the precious Names of Jesus, Amen.



If anyone would like to share a Prayer
with the church family, please call Linda
on 07564839380 or

E-mail lindawfleming625@gmail.com.



No names required because
God Knows.

Dear father God, we pray for Messy Vale School for the families who are finding thing hard to manage because of financial difficulty or have loosed jobs and a worried about Christmas. We pray for the teacher and all their hard work, and teaching the children under strange circumstances in this time of the pandemic.

We give thanks to God for Joanne and team who make time to take food to school to help families in the holidays, we pray for all who have donation the food. We are so privileged to be able to help. Thanks be to God. Amen

Hi All,

I hope you all enjoyed your Christmas Pack . In it I mentioned that you will be able to donate via the website . I have now set it up, if you go to the website

www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

Click on Charity News , then click on donate online it will take you to the give as you live webpage where you can donate . You can also register with them to make donations when you shop .

I donated 13p the other day from a £18.00 purchase because I went via their page to the Website I was using.

Over the years we have raised thousands of pounds via all the events, signing Church Christmas Cards, toy services and singing over the festive period lets see if we can match that, this year when we do our giving on the Moor Than a Christmas ADVENTure

https://www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

HEATON MOOR UNITED CHURCH

CHARITY NEWS COME AND SEE BETHLEHAM THIS CHRISTMAS CHRISTMAS 2020 HOME CALENDAR NEWS SERVICES ACTIVITIES f

BOOKINGS


CHARITY NEWS

Home » Charity News

Each year the Church chooses 2 main charities to support, this year we have chosen [Motor Neurone Disease Association](#) and [Leprosy Mission](#) Throughout the year we also hold one-off events to support other charities these have been :

[JMA](#)
[Francis House](#)
[Lebone Village in South Africa](#)
[Action for Children](#)
[Christian Aid](#)
[Methodist Homes](#)

If you wish to donate to the Church Charity Fund either, [donate online](#) or a cheque made out to Heaton Moor United Church ref on the back Church Charities to Heaton Moor United Church Or a BACS payment to : Stanley Road CO-OP Bank Heaton Moor Account 65561034 Stockport Sort Code 08-92-99 SK4 4HL Ref: Church Charities



Sharon

'Mark'(ing) the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ

Reflecting on Mark 1:1-8

Recently I was asking a group of friends, "what is the first book in the New Testament (NT)?" I heard four different answers which are very interesting to note. The first friend answered, "Matthew is the first book in the NT because with the gospel according to Matthew the NT canon begins." The second friend replied, "the book of I Thessalonians is the first book in the NT as it was the first book that was written, which was about 51CE, much before the gospels were written." The third friend replied, "gospel according to Luke is the first book as it records the birth of Jesus Christ, and subsequently gives us the story of Jesus' ministry, his death on the Cross and the resurrection." The fourth friend replied, "gospel according to Mark is the first book in the NT as it was the first Gospel to written among the four gospel writers." As I heard these four different answers, I recognised a rich diversity in the very understanding what does 'first' means, and how such a definition of 'first' defines each of my friends understanding and perspective of faith. The big learning for me in listening to these four diverse answers is the fact that there is no one first; there are various firsts, where all my friends understand 'first' from their own perspective and from their social location.

In the prescribed reading for this second Sunday in Advent, which is from Mark 1:1-8, the gospel writer Mark, who was the youngest and the 'first' one to write a gospel among the four gospel writers, begins his gospel with these words. "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (v1). 'The beginning' of his gospel, according to Mark is very different from the rest of the three gospel writers. For Matthew, 'the beginning' of his gospel has the genealogy of Jesus Christ. For Luke, 'the beginning' of his gospel has the story of Zachariah and Elizabeth, besides an introduction that he has researched thoroughly in writing his gospel. For John, 'the beginning' of his gospel is about the word who was in the beginning. Again, we notice diverse 'the beginnings,' for all the four gospel writers begin their gospels to four different audience and contexts, therefore each has a way of beginning their story of Jesus. The context of the writer and the context of the audience factors in defining 'the beginning' for any story and we see it succinctly with the gospel writers.

Let us now reflect on 'the beginning' of the Mark's gospel. In Mark's beginning to the gospel of Jesus Christ, he quotes a passage from prophet Isaiah and explains that text in reference to the life and ministry of John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way to Jesus Christ. Allow me to present three ways of understanding 'the beginning' of the good news of Jesus Christ according to Mark.

1. The beginning begins with a critique of the centres:

In order to present the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Mark begins by preparing the way, and he has chosen John the baptiser, who according to him lives up to the prophesy of Isaiah. What do you expect when someone begins to narrate or write a story of Jesus Christ, the son of God? One would expect the setting either to be the place where the Son of God lived and dwelt, which should be something palatial and opulent. Or one would expect the scene to be at a temple, where the people then believed that God's presence hovered over there. On the contrary, Mark begins the beginning with a scene in the wilderness with John the baptiser preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. "And people from the whole Judean country side, and all the people from Jerusalem were going out to him and

were baptized by him in river Jordan confessing their sins” (4-5v). The beginning for Mark begins with a critique of the temples and opulence, where he was giving a message to his audience that, Jesus Christ the Son of God locates in sites of margins, the wilderness and not in the centres of the power. For in a way, from that wilderness, from the waters of a small river Jordan, from the sites of the margins, Jesus’ ministry begins, and therefore for Mark such a beginning marks the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The beginning begins with a creative ‘show, don’t tell’ method:

One of the styles in story writings is ‘show don’t tell,’ allowing the reader to experience the story through action, words, thoughts feelings etc. The best example is: “Don’t tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on a broken glass.” Having set the beginning in the wilderness, Mark now applies this technique of ‘show, don’t tell,’ where he allows his audience to experience Jesus Christ, the Son of God as a person who baptises with Holy Spirit unlike John the baptiser who baptises with water. Mark explains the power of the Son of God, by demonstrating the humility of John who testifies in verse 7, “the one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.” By beginning his gospel with the story of John the Baptist and his message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, Mark was showing to his audience that Jesus Christ the Son of God, who is coming is a forgiving God, who forgives anyone and everyone, for Jesus works on the ministry of grace, with a preferential option to the least, the last and the lost.

3. The beginning begins with a clarion call:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for Mark begins with a voice, a voice in the wilderness, a herald, who was calling for action, repentance for the forgiveness of sins from people. With Jesus, the Son of God stepping into the unjust world as a human being, the message that paves the way for him is the voice for action towards justice and peace. The message is not always soothing to the audience, it was a voice disturbing people towards repentance from complacency and injustice. Mark does not record the response of the crowd who heard this voice for repentance, but Luke records it. In Luke 3: 7-17, the crowd asks “what should we do?” and John the baptiser replies, share your food, give up being greedy and don’t be corrupt exploiting people and the systems. All I am trying to say is, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ calls for action, calls for a change, calls for justice, calls for repentance and calls for being and becoming a new creation.

One of the English sayings about beginning is “Well begun is half done,” and for me Mark, fulfils that and sets the tone and tenor of the gospel of Jesus Christ with his meaningful beginning. In short, with this kind of beginning, Mark is communicating to his audience then and us now that the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God is about critiquing the centres and identifying with the margins, is about showing God’s grace and mercy to all of the creation and is about action, an action for change and new creation.

The relevance from this text for our context today is firstly to learn that there is diversity in understanding of ‘the beginning’ and in narrating the gospel of Jesus Christ. The call is to be open and accommodative in humility to knowing and receive others perspectives in sharing the gospel. Secondly, we as a church are called to begin the story of Jesus Christ today, not from the centres of powers but from the sites of the margins, for the Son of God finds margins at home. Thirdly, the gospel of Jesus Christ comes with a clarion call, a call for action, a call

for return to God, a call for justice and a call for new creation. It is insufficient to shout in the street corners calling God, “Lord, Lord!” rather God in Jesus is calling us to show our discipleship in action, and in striving for transforming our world today.

Finally, I want to conclude this reflection by asking if Mark had a style and message in beginning the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the challenge for each of us and as a church is, how are we marking the beginning the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God today in this context of our post-secular world? The message is clear and loud, we are called to begin the gospel from the margins, led by the ministry of grace and with profound actions for transformation.

May God grant God’s strength to us so that we are creative, critical and consistent in our discipling Jesus Christ today.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta,
4th December 2020

Sunday 6th December

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.

Opening Prayer

Lord grant us the same eagerness in waiting and the bigness of desire that we had when children, and the faith that knows the greatest gift is Christ Jesus himself. Amen.

Hymn: Come, thou long-expected Jesus
(Singing the Faith 169)

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ykTZvZPz48&feature=youtu.be>

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

Father God, whose is the world in which I live,
and to whom I owe my being, accept the love
and praise for which I was created.
Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes took
human flesh to reveal God's glory and to bring

the Kingdom; who for us sinners endured the
cross and triumphed in resurrection, accept
the love and praise for which I was redeemed.
Holy Spirit of God, sent as the seal upon the
finished work of Christ to equip the church
and to bear fruit in yielded lives, accept the
love and praise for which I was sanctified.
Thanks be to you, Almighty God, Father, Son
and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Isaiah 40 verses 1 to 11

Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 1 verses 1 to 8

Time to Reflect

The usual question from preachers is along the lines of 'Have you prepared?' and recites a litany of pre-Christmas tasks. Predictable; boring; patronising. And below the dignity of the event.

The obsession of preachers – and advertisers and shopkeepers – on 'preparation' means we miss the point. It isn't about the red-carpet or the ticker-tape, since nothing could be worthy of the entrance of the Son of God. Preparing is pointless unless the event takes place.

Rather, like the sentry, we are primed for his arrival. We are watching for his coming. Fans of steam trains spot the tell-tale plume of smoke before the train itself comes into sight; we watch the arrivals board as we wait for family to arrive at the airport; so worshippers spot the tell-tale of majesty veiled in flesh and laid in a manger. They come in wonder and worship, and they return transformed by the love that stooped to conquer. The herald of Good Tidings tells them that that they can

behold their God. He is here. He will baptize, not with water as a sign, but with the reality of his Holy Spirit. As we welcome him, so we become *his* guests, his flock.

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

Lord Jesus Christ, how little the world seems to have changed in 2000 years! We pray for those situations that are still sadly too familiar: you were born to a couple too poor to afford the usual sacrifice, and we pray for those who struggle to make ends meet; there was no room to welcome you at your birth, and we pray for so many homeless on our streets, and refugees from danger; your touch brought healing to the sick, and we pray for those who suffer today; you fed the hungry crowds, and we pray for those who are hungry, for those dependent on the food banks; you were familiar with the sight of soldiers in the streets, and we pray for places of conflict, that peace, justice and reconciliation may come; people whose lives were broken by failure and shame found restoration and hope in you, and we pray for those who feel they have lost all their worth or have sinned beyond redemption; may they know your grace that can give them the worth of children of God; the lost and weary and bewildered found a yoke that was easy; be so gentle a Saviour to the many who still find life overwhelming. We bring our prayers in your name, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to 'The prophets' voice comes down the years' (Singing the Faith 162) or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind https://youtu.be/wPy4vpjU_f8 [tune only]

The prophets' voice comes down the years to teach and to inspire, to show the nature of our God in words and deeds of fire; not to disclose some rigid plan that God has set in stone, but to renew the promises the saints have always known.

The prophets' voice speaks of the past -- the actions that reveal the way God used the people then this broken world to heal; and then translates the things gone by in ways that we find new so we can judge the world we know by standards ever true.

The prophets' voice holds up a glass in which to see our day; events which span the globe around and things we do and say. It calls us to repent and turn from things that tear life down, to choose the path that Jesus chose and share his work and crown.

Alan Hinton

A prayer of blessing

Christ Jesus, the Light of the world, shine upon us; Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace, fill our life with his peace; Christ Jesus, gift of the Father's love, set our heart ablaze with his love; and the blessing of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and all we love and pray for, now and always. Amen.

Original Materials by Rev Godfrey Nicholson
All Hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.
Local Churches please insert CCLI 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>

Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:
'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!'
And I said, 'What shall I cry?'
All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
'Here is your God!'
See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ,
the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight" ',
John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the
forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole
Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem
were going out to him, and were baptized by him
in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John
was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt
around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild
honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more
powerful than I is coming after me; I am not
worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his
sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will
baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'