



The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit



Thursday 25th December 2025: Christmas Day

Theme for today is "Praise to God the Christ has come"

Prepared by Rev Derek Grimshaw

Opening words:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

Psalm 98

Hymn 330 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZhgbp97y7Q>

Joy to the world; the Lord is come;
Let Earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love.

Joy to the Earth, the Savior reigns;
Our mortal songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.

Prayers

Ever-living God, whose glory was revealed in the Word made flesh, may we, who have seen such splendour in the coming of your Son, be true witnesses to your self-giving love in the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Loving God, you have searched us and known us, our blindness, our frailties, our fears and our selfishness. In sorrow we confess that we have sinned against you and disobeyed your command to love. Forgive us, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, who became like us that we might become like him. **Amen.**

Bible Readings:

Isaiah 52: 7-10

Hebrews 1: 1-12

John 1: 1-14

Hymn 197: Cradled in a manger, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TCrre2ibYs>

Cradled in a manger, meanly,
Laid the Son of Man His head;
Sleeping His first earthly slumber
Where the oxen had been fed.
Happy were those shepherds listening
To the holy angel's word;
Happy they within that stable
Worshipping their infant Lord.

Evil things are there before Thee;
In the heart, where they have fed,
Wilt Thou pitifully enter,
Son of Man, and lay Thy head?
Enter, then, O Christ most holy;
Make a Christmas in my heart;
Make a heaven of my manger:
It is heaven where Thou art.

Happy all who hear the message
Of His coming from above;
Happier still who hail His coming,
And with praises greet His love.
Blessed Savior, Christ most holy,
In a manger Thou didst rest;
Canst Thou stoop again, yet lower,
And abide within my breast?

And to those who never listened
To the message of Thy birth,
Who have winter, but no Christmas
Bringing them Thy peace on earth,
Send to these the joyful tidings;
By all people, in each home,
Be there heard the Christmas anthem;
Praise to God, the Christ has come!

Reflection

A feature of Christmas for many years for me was the Midnight Communion service and in my previous appointment three of my churches had such services, which posed quite a challenge for me. I am very much a morning person, and I found it torture on Christmas Eve desperately trying to stay awake until 11pm and then driving to a Church to lead worship at a time when ordinarily I would be in bed. Yet, these were some of the services I loved the most, invariably we would have visitors and there was something special about the expectation of the clock moving on just one minute. I always had somebody primed from the congregation to come and light the Christ candle at midnight and at that point we would pass the peace and share bread and wine, the first sacrament of Christmas day. One of the Churches would finish with us all walking outside into the street with our candles singing "Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Tired as I was, this was a way to mark the day of celebration.

Today is much more than simply retelling an old story in the same way that we might watch "It's a wonderful life" or "A Christmas Carol" once again, this is far more than gazing into the stable momentarily and taking note of the sweet little scene of new parents doting on their baby.

The prophet Isaiah says

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'

Saint John says:

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

The writer to the Hebrews says

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

Charles Wesley says:

Our God contracted to a span incomprehensibly made man.

Today we celebrate the enormity of God compacted into the form of a newborn baby and if we don't go out into the street singing "joy to the world" then who will?

Hymn 222: Who would think that what was needed <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvR6we1DmrM>

Who would think that what was needed
to transform and save the earth
might not be a plan or army,
proud in purpose, proved in worth?
Who would think, despite derision,
that a child should lead the way?
God surprises earth with heaven,
coming here on Christmas Day.

Centuries of skill and science
span the past from which we move,
yet experience questions whether,
with such progress, we improve.
While the human lot we ponder,
lest our hopes and humour fray,
God surprises earth with heaven,
coming here on Christmas Day.

Shepherds watch and wise men wonder.
monarchs' scorn and angels sing.
such a place as none would reckon
hosts a holy helpless thing.
Stable beasts and by-passed strangers
watch a baby laid in hay.
God surprises earth with heaven,
coming here on Christmas Day.

Prayer

Loving God, we pray for our community . . .

In the midst of our everyday lives, surprise us with glimpses of the glorious, humble love at the heart of existence.
Lord, come to your people.

In your mercy set us free.

Searched for,

Christ comes.

To the wise and powerful, star-led to Bethlehem, seeking a king, he comes, child of Mary, crowned with meekness, worthy of every gift.

Loving God, we pray for the leaders of the world. . .

Guide them with your light to the true wisdom of justice and peace, of freedom and respect for every human life.

Lord, come to your people.

In your mercy set us free.

Longed for,

Christ comes.

To Anna and Simeon, whose days are lived in faithful expectation, he comes, a new life to the old, a living prophecy of hope.

Loving God, we pray for the Church in all the world . . .

Unite us by your Spirit and make us faithful witnesses to the hope we have in you.

Lord, come to your people.

In your mercy set us free.

Prayed for,

Christ comes.

To men and women, girls and boys, crying out in darkness, pain and loneliness, he comes, baptized, at one with us, our Saviour, healer and friend.

Loving God, we pray for those whose lives are hard and painful or whose existence is sorrowful, bitter or empty . . .

In their need, may they know your healing touch, reaching out to comfort, strengthen and restore.

Lord, come to your people.

In your mercy set us free.

Unlooked for and searched for, longed for and prayed for, loving God, you come to us now as you have come to your people in every age.

We thank you for all who have reflected the light of Christ.

Help us to follow their example and bring us with them to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 212: O come all ye faithful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zw-FAqx9kpw>

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come, and behold Him, born the King of angels!

Refrain:

O come, let us adore Him;

O come, let us adore Him;

O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

God of God, Light of Light,
lo, He abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten not created.

[Refrain]

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!
[Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!
[Refrain]

Blessing

May he, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill our lives with his light and joy and peace; and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, remain with us always. **Amen.**