

Sunday 13th 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

Loving Lord, as we worship we join with all those who are worshipping this day. Whether alone at home, or online, whether in a building or in an open space amongst others.

Constrained by circumstances, we lack opportunity to meet each other in love. Come amongst us generous, hospitable God, and welcome us into your loving presence as we worship you.

AMEN

Hymn: Singing the Faith 369

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/posts/baptise-us-with-your-spirit-stf-369/>

Baptise us with your Spirit,
majestic, humble Christ,
to overcome temptation;
assailed, but not enticed.
Baptise us with your Spirit,
that in each other's eyes
we may discern your purpose,
and cast away disguise.

Baptise us with your Spirit
to careful, patient, thought,
and habit-forming virtues
aspired to, copied, taught,

till clothed with new creation,
self-critical, reformed,
we demonstrate the gospel,
to you alone conformed.

Baptise us with your Spirit
in unrestricted ways
that move us, mind and body,
to laugh and shout your praise.
Send us to clear the rubble
of each defensive wall,
inviting to your table
our neighbours, one and all.

Brian Wren (b. 1936)

Let us pray together

All seeing God,
You watch over every instant of our life,
showing us the glory of your creation
if we should but pause to look;
showing us the generosity of your Spirit
if we should but hold out our hands to
receive; showing us your work that needs
to be done if we should only use our eyes
and ears.

Turn us away, loving Lord, from our
insistent self
and lead us to see more clearly
what you give and what you ask of us this
day

AMEN

Today's Gospel Reading:

John 1; 6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹ This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰ He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."^[a] ²¹ And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²² Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³ He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵ They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah,^[b] nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷ the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Time to Reflect

John the witness, whose testimony to the Jewish leaders began with those negatives:

I am not the Messiah

I am not Elijah

I am not the Prophet....

It is tempting to think that the Jewish leaders were also being negative, looking to point out John's deficiencies, but what if they were really looking for the Messiah. What if they were sad and disappointed that here they did not have whom they were looking for?

They didn't know whom they were looking for – but they had to take some sort of answer back to those who had sent them, so they pressed John for more.

His reply still turns to the cryptic – I am not the one whom is to come, he is already amongst you, though you do not know him.

That the Messiah could be anyone was fully in the Jewish tradition.

The Messiah could be the person standing next to you.

The people who stand at the airport arrivals with a board with someone's name on do not know who they are to collect.

They rely on the right person to come over and introduce themselves, but they are expected.

They wait for the right person to reveal themselves so that they can move on. Is this the way we should be looking for the Messiah? Standing in a prominent place, holding a board with his name on, relying on him to come and find us so that we can move on.

Or should we be looking around at the crowd, in case the Messiah has walked straight past us and is expecting us to follow where he leads.

Jesus will leave enough clues in our everyday lives for us to recognize where he has been, where he wants us to go.

We need to make a conscious effort every day to see when Jesus is amongst us and to ask what he is calling us to do.

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

Answering God
we pray today for all those who have unanswered questions
we pray for refugees and displaced people,
for the homeless and those who ask
"when shall I have a home".

We pray for those worried about loss of work,
shortage of money, collapse of plans, who ask
"what happens now"?

We pray for the lonely, the scared, and the vulnerable who ask
"who can help me"

We pray for those on our own hearts at this time.....

Answering God, bring your love to these
your people in need
and help them to see you in their life.
AMEN

The Lord's Prayer *Our Father*

Hymn: Listen to Singing the Faith 175
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBKzCpkXJR4>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

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.

So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God,
and 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.

So here I am to worship ...

And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.

And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.

So here I am to worship ...

Tim Hughes

A prayer of blessing

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be
with us in this week

May the love of God steer us in our
actions this week

and may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be beside us this week

AMEN

Original Materials by Pat Heynes

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>