

Circuit service for Christmas Day 2022

Prepared by Rev Jenny Dowding

Advent candle lighting liturgy

The day of joy and celebration has arrived! Jesus is born!

We relight the four candles of Advent – of expectation, hope, peace and love - and we light the central Christ candle.

Jesus has come.

The lighting of the candles

As the Christ candle is lit, a reader says:

... the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. (*Luke 2: 10-11*)

Response

StF 168 – EITHER sing verses 1 – 5

1	Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come, Lord Jesus, come, to this world of ours.	4	Touch us with your love ; touch us with your love ; touch us with your love in this world of ours.
2	Lord, we need you now ; Lord, we need you now ; Lord, we need you now in this world of ours.	5	May we see your light ; may we see your light ; may we see your light in this world of ours.
3	Fill us with your peace ; fill us with your peace ; fill us with your peace in this world of ours.	Francesca Leftley (<i>b.</i> 1955)	

OR:

Leader Come Lord Jesus, we need your hope
 Fill us with your peace
 Touch us with your love
 May we see your light

Response ***Welcome Lord Jesus***
 We receive your hope
 We share your peace
 We celebrate your love
 We follow your light

Prayer

Loving God,
We thank you for the birth of Jesus Christ our Saviour,
May we always welcome him into our world,
our community,
our homes,

our lives.
Amen.

Singing the Faith 212 – O come, all ye faithful

[#17 O Come, all ye faithful arr. David Willcocks King's College Cambridge 2009 - YouTube](#)

<p>1 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 : <i>O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord !</i></p> <p>2 True God of true God, Light of Light eternal, lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb ; Son of the Father, begotten, not created :</p> <p>3 See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle, leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze ; we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps :</p>	<p>4 Lo, star-led chieftains, Magi, Christ adoring, offer him incense, gold, and myrrh ; we to the Christ-child bring our hearts' oblations :</p> <p>5 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above : 'Glory to God in the highest :'</p> <p>6 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be glory given : Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing :</p> <p>Latin, 18th century, possibly by John Francis Wade (c. 1711–1786) <i>and others</i></p>
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Prayer

Yea, Lord, we greet you,
born this happy morning!

We greet you as love:
love that lifts up the lowly;
love that includes the outcast;
love that heals the broken hearted.

We greet you as hope:
hope that injustice will end;
hope that the vulnerable are cared for;
hope that life in all its fulness is a reality for all of creation.

We greet you as peace:
peace that passes our understanding;
peace that comforts the fearful;
peace that is everlasting.

Yea, Lord, we greet you,
born this happy morning! **Amen.**

(Revd Ian Worsfold, Chaplaincy Coordinator, City, University of London.)

If you are in church, or with others you don't know, greet one another and introduce yourself!

Singing the Faith 193 Born in the Night

[Born in the Night, Mary's Child - YouTube](#)

<p>1 Born in the night, Mary's Child, a long way from your home ; coming in need, Mary's Child, born in a borrowed room.</p> <p>2 Clear shining light, Mary's Child, your face lights up our way ; light of the world, Mary's Child, dawn on our darkened day.</p>	<p>3 Truth of our life, Mary's Child, you tell us God is good ; prove it is true, Mary's Child, go to your cross of wood.</p> <p>4 Hope of the world, Mary's Child, you're coming soon to reign ; King of the earth, Mary's Child, walk in our streets again.</p> <p>Geoffrey Ainger (b. 1925)</p>
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If you are in church, invite people to show their favourite Christmas present

Bible reading – Luke 2: 18-20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Singing the Faith 216 – See him lying on a bed of straw (Calypso Carol)

[CALYPSO CAROL SEE HIM LYING ON OF STRAW - YouTube](#)

<p>1 See him lying on a bed of straw ; draughty stable with an open door, Mary cradling the babe she bore ; the Prince of Glory is his name : <i>O now carry me to Bethlehem to see the Lord of love again ; just as poor as was the stable then, the Prince of Glory when he came.</i></p> <p>2 Star of silver, sweep across the skies, show where Jesus in the manger lies ; shepherds, swiftly from your stupor rise to see the Saviour of the world :</p>	<p>3 Angels, sing again the song you sang, sing the story of God's gracious plan ; sing that Bethl'em's little baby can be the Saviour of us all :</p> <p>4 Mine are riches from your poverty, from your innocence, eternity ; mine, forgiveness by your death for me ; child of sorrow for my joy :</p> <p>Michael Perry (1942–1996)</p>
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Reflection – Don't be afraid

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Mtegp6BRYIx0bWO4UHC6nIAoDUNJ0MI6/view?usp=sharing>

Some people will have seen before, this olive wood nativity set I bought in Bethlehem. The carver has made the figures of the holy family, a shepherd and animals. There are also three Magi, but they're separated from the newborn Jesus by an enormous wall with a watchtower. This is a representation – to scale - of the separation barrier that surrounds present-day Bethlehem, cutting it off from Jerusalem. It reminds me to pray for my sisters and brothers in Bethlehem and Palestine, where every aspect of life is controlled by the illegal Israeli Occupation. It also reminds me of the turbulent world we live in, and the dangerous world into which Jesus was born over two thousand years ago. There was an occupying force – the Roman Empire – which made life cruel and hard. Mary and Joseph, after all, had had a long arduous journey from Nazareth because of the Roman census. After the birth of Jesus in a borrowed manger, they would have to flee to Egypt to escape the slaughter of innocent boys by King Herod.



Several years ago, Elias Najjar of the Palestinian Bible Society, speaking from Bethlehem about Advent hope, said, **“I want people not to be afraid.”**

It was in a dangerous and difficult time and place, that angels, God’s messengers, proclaimed, on a number of occasions around the time of Jesus’ birth, “Don’t be afraid!”

To Mary, to Joseph, to the shepherds, came the reassuring **“Don’t be afraid.”**

And that comes to us this Christmas Day 2022 – Don’t be afraid.

Of course, it’s easy to say the words. How can we trust them? How can we live in today’s world without fear?

I’ve been pondering again recently, the difference between belief and faith.

To be a follower of Jesus, a Christian disciple, is to hold both belief and faith. *Belief* is mainly about the act of holding a set or system of beliefs, and primarily involves the mind. This is important, but it’s not the same as faith. Faith is about *trust* in God, and about not knowing everything. It has an element of mystery.

Richard Rohr wrote: "True faith involves not knowing and even not needing to know, but we made faith demanding to know and insisting that we do know! we trust that God alone steers this mysterious universe, where there is clearly much hidden from us and much still before us (New Testament faith) is foundational confidence or trust that God cares about what is happening right now".

The birth of Jesus – God taking human flesh to live among us - invites our faith, our trust, our confidence that God cares for this world God made.

The shepherds came and saw. There must have been so many questions in their minds. They were mainly uneducated men. They didn't leave the manger with a set of beliefs about God. But they were transformed by the experience, and they were filled with joy, and rushed into the town to tell everyone what they had seen. Fear was gone, to be replaced with faith and joy.

Mary, too, was left pondering all that had happened, no doubt trying to make some kind of sense of it all. She couldn't have understood everything, but there's no doubt that she trusted God as she treasured in her heart the events at Bethlehem.

In the little town of Bethlehem, the hopes and fears of all the years came together.

This year, the Mayor of the city of Bethlehem sent greetings to us in the west from the city where the Prince of Peace was born. He said, "We celebrate with you the birth of light that came in the midst of darkness and oppression. We celebrate this light even as this darkness continues for the Palestinian people in general and the people of Bethlehem in particular."

Jesus speaks to something deep within us - longings for something greater, more real. Today, as then, Jesus speaks to our fear and anxiety - Don't be afraid.

Today we celebrate with joy, and without fear, that God has moved in among us. Jesus is Emmanuel – God with us, alongside us, *for us*.

I pray that, after this Christmas, we will not return to our old fearful ways, anxious about ourselves, our families, our country and our world.

May we continue to hear the angel voice – Don't be afraid, for I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

And, like the shepherds, may we keep the rumour of God alive.

Singing the Faith 213– O little town of Bethlehem

[O Little Town Of Bethlehem - YouTube](#)

<p>1 O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie ! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light ; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.</p> <p>2 O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all the earth ! For Christ is born of Mary ; and, gathered all above, while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.</p>	<p>3 How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given ! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven. No ear may hear his coming ; but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in.</p> <p>4 O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray ; cast out our sin, and enter in ; be born in us today ! We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell ; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel !</p> <p>Phillips Brooks (1835–1893)</p>
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Prayers of concern

On this Christmas Day let us give thanks to God for coming among us in Jesus, bringing eternal hope...

On this Christmas Day, let us give thanks to God for those we love, whether they are near or far today...

On this Christmas Day, let us call to mind those for whom the promises of God seem far away:

...those who are lonely.

...those with increasing financial pressures.

...those without permanent accommodation.

...those seeking refuge in unfamiliar countries due to the fear of war.

On this Christmas Day, let us call to mind those who have gone before us who have faithfully told the Christmas story of God's love coming to earth to younger generations.

On this Christmas Day, let us call to mind our own needs, and ask that the promises of Christmas might be true for us and for those we meet not just today, but every day...

(Revd Ian Worsfold, Chaplaincy Coordinator, City, University of London.)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Singing the Faith 202 – Hark! The herald-angels sing

[Hark! The Herald Angels Sing \(Live At The Helix In Dublin... - YouTube\)](#)

<p>1 Hark ! The herald-angels sing glory to the new-born King, peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled. Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies ; with the angelic host proclaim : 'Christ is born in Bethlehem.' <i>Hark ! The herald-angels sing glory to the new-born King.</i></p> <p>2 Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord, late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see ! Hail, the incarnate Deity ! Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel :</p>	<p>3 Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace ! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness ! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth :</p> <p>Charles Wesley (1707–1788)</p>
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Blessing

May the God who sent his Son into the world go with us.

May the Son whom we worship at Christmas be with us.

May the Spirit who brings life to our lives stay with us. **Amen.**