



December 2021

Dear friends,

If you have the Internet, you will find a video to accompany this sheet on YouTube search for Isle of Man Methodist Church and you will find it on our YouTube channel.

This is the first in a new schedule of MMAST services as we have moved to producing monthly services. As such, it is longer than previous services, and we hope it will be helpful for you to engage with throughout December. You may wish to use this service as a whole each week through December, or use it weekly in parts.

However you choose to make use of this resource, we pray that through this season you will know the joy of Immanuel - God With You.

Nollick Ghennal, Christmas blessing to you!

Isle of Man Methodist Staff Team

Opening Prayer

Blessing and honour and glory and power be to our God,
for his love revealed in the Word made flesh.

Blessing and honour and glory and power be to our God,
coming among us and sharing our humanity.

Blessing and honour and glory and power be to our God,

filling Mary with the life of the Divine.

Blessing and honour and glory and power be to our God,
for our salvation, for bringing joy and peace into our world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Hymn: StF 165 - Advent candles tell their story (v1)

Advent candles tell their story
as we watch and pray,
longing for the Day of Glory,
'Come, Lord, soon,' we say.
Pain and sorrow, tears and sadness
changed for gladness
on that day.

Mark Earey (b.1965)

Reading - Micah 4:1-5

Reflection

Some of the Staff Team have chosen a favourite carol for this MMAST service. Rebecca's choice "It came upon the midnight clear" was written by Edmund Hamilton Sears, a Quaker in the 19th Century, it is a carol that always strikes a chord with it's emphasis on a longing for peace in this broken world as "neath the angel strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong;"

Successive World Wars and all the conflicts
experienced in the world since those words were
written serve to highlight the strange juxtaposition of
excitement, hope, expectation, and longing that

Advent engenders as we too look to the promise of
the day when "Nation will not take up sword against
nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

Hymn: StF 205 - It came upon the midnight clear

It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
'Peace on the earth, good will to men,
from heaven's all-gracious King!'
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
with peaceful wings unfurled;
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing;
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and man, at war with man, hears not
the love-song which they bring.
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
and hear the angels sing!

For lo, the days are hastening on,
to prophets shown of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when the new heaven and earth shall own,
the Prince of Peace their King,
and all the world repeat the song
which now the angels sing.

Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876)

Prayer

The angels sang "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to all people."

Lord, give peace in the hearts of all, peace in our land, peace among the nations:
peace in our homes and peace in all our dealings;
peace through him who is the Prince of Peace.
Lord Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary,
be born in us today. Amen.

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Hymn: StF 165 - Advent candles tell their story (v2)

Prophet voices loudly crying,
making pathways clear,
glimpsing glory, self-denying,
calling all to hear.
Through their message -- challenged, shaken --
hearts awaken:
God is near!

Mark Earey (b.1965)

Reading - Zephaniah 3:14-17

Reflection

The words of the prophets serve to remind us that this babe born in a manger is no less than the Lord himself come among us. I sometimes wonder if in the midst of Advent busyness, and with so many familiar traditions and perhaps an overfamiliarity with the carols we sing, we are in danger of taking for granted the awesome truth of what happened 2000 years ago in the animal shelter.

One of my favourite carols is very rarely sung these days and it's tune is not particularly well known - which is possibly one of the reasons! Perhaps another reason it's fallen out of favour is because it is too richly packed with incredible theological statements that academics could take their whole lives to unpack!

Whenever I hear or sing the words "being's source begins to be, and God himself is born" I am filled once more with wonder and amazement at this incredible event we celebrate each year.

And not just once a year - whenever we invite Christ to come into our lives he does. God himself, the one through whom all things were made (John 1:3) shows himself to be our friend and is there with us sharing in our joys, and bearing our sorrows.

Hymn: StF 199 - Glory be to God on high

Glory be to God on high,
and peace on earth descend:
God comes down, he bows the sky,
and shows himself our friend:
God the invisible appears:
God, the blest, the great I AM,
sojourns in this vale of tears,
and Jesus is his name.

Him the angels all adored,
their Maker and their King;
tidings of their humbled Lord
they now to mortals bring.
Emptied of his majesty,
of his dazzling glories shorn,
being's source begins to be,
and God himself is born!

See the eternal Son of God
a mortal son of man;
dwelling in an earthly clod,
whom heaven cannot contain!
Stand amazed, ye heavens, at this!
See the Lord of earth and skies;
humbled to the dust he is,
and in a manger lies.

We, earth's children, now rejoice,
the Prince of Peace proclaim;
with heaven's host lift up our voice,
and shout Immanuel's name;
knees and hearts to him we bow;
of our flesh and of our bone,
Jesus is our brother now,
and God is all our own.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayer

Immanuel, God is with us. He has entered our darkness with his great light. He comes as our God and yet as a child. Lord, help us and your whole church to walk as children of the light. Teach us to see your presence in each other: to be aware that what we do to each other we do to you.
Lord Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary,
be born in us today.

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Hymn: StF 165 - Advent candles tell their story (v3)

John the Baptist, by his preaching
and by water poured,
brought to those who heard his teaching
news of hope restored:
'Keep your vision strong and steady,
and be ready
for the Lord.'

Mark Earey (b.1965)

Reading - Luke 3:1-18

Reflection

John the Baptist, although found in the New Testament, stands as the last of the prophets in the Old Testament model. Here is a lone voice calling out in the wilderness for people to repent and prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord.

Richard Hooton's chosen carol invites us to examine our own lives, to acknowledge the evil things in ourselves, and to pray that Christ will enter our lives and our homes and "make a Christmas" in our hearts.

Hymn: StF 197 - Cradled in a manger, meanly

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.

Happy all who hear the message
of his coming from above;
happier still who hail his coming,
and with praises greet his love.
Blessed Saviour, Christ most holy,
in a manger thou didst rest;

canst thou stoop again, yet lower,
and abide within my breast?

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.

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!

George Stringer Rowe (1830-1913)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, born of Mary, you are part of the human family:
you share our joys and our sorrows, our hopes and our fears.
Bless our homes with your loving presence, be known to be with us, our families and our friends.
Lord Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary,
be born in us today.
Amen.

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**Hymn: StF 165 - Advent candles tell their story (v4)**

Mary's gift, beyond all telling,
was to give Christ room.
She gave God a human dwelling
in a mother's womb.
Who could guess the final story?
-- cross and glory;
empty tomb!

Mark Earey (b.1965)

Reading - Luke 1:26-38

Reflection

Often, too often, Mary's acceptance of Gabriel's message is only given a fleeting mention in our protestant carol services - the above reading comes on the 4th Sunday of Advent in our lectionary and our churches by this time have usually moved on from an Advent focus to a Christmas celebration.

Janet Corlett has chosen "The Angel Gabriel" for our service, which speaks of how "gentle Mary meekly bowed her head".

Mary simply says "I am the Lord's servant...may your word to me be fulfilled." (Luke 1:38). This is Mary's "Yes" to the Lord, spoken from a heart filled with pure love for God.

Deacon Keith Furnier reminds us that In a Biblical context, "heart" is a word that means much more than the fleshy organ at the centre of our chest cavity. It refers to our centre, the core of each of us, the place where our deepest identity is rooted, and from which our fundamental choices about life are made.

The Annunciation reveals the meaning of the Christian vocation. The Virgin of Nazareth teaches us how to live our real lives in a real world, by saying Yes

to the One who created the world and is recreating it through His Son.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared, bearing the message and calling her to a special mission, she said "YES." We are invited to say "Yes" as well and believe that "nothing is impossible with God." Let's consider her response to the message: "I am the Lord's servant...may your word to me be fulfilled." It is in these words that we discover the vocation of every Christian. (<https://www.catholic.org/mary/pray.php>)

Hymn: StF 187 - The Angel Gabriel

The Angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
'All hail,' said he, 'thou lowly maiden Mary,
most highly favoured lady.'
Gloria!

'For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
all generations laud and honour thee,
thy son shall be Immanuel, by seers foretold;
most highly favoured lady.'
Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
'To me be as it pleaseth God,' she said,
'My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name:'
most highly favoured lady.
Gloria!

Of her, Immanuel, the Christ was born
in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
'Most highly favoured lady.'
Gloria!

Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924)

Prayer

Whatever curveball life throw me,
God can handle this.
I can handle following God's guidance.
So I can handle this.
There is an answer.
I don't know what it is - and I don't need to know.
I take the next step.
It is enough.



Hymn: StF 165 - Advent candles tell their story (v5)

Advent candles tell their story
on this Christmas Day.
Those who waited for God's glory:
they prepared the way.
Christ is with us: loving, giving,
in us living,
here today!

Mark Earey (b. 1965)

Reading - Luke 2:1-20

Reflection

I find it hard not to be envious of those first visitors when Jesus was born - the rush of excitement, hurrying off to find "this thing that has happened", and returning filled with wonder "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen"

But we needn't be envious, as we too can join in this journey, this pilgrimage to Bethlehem. Jen Casson's

chosen carol reminds us of this with it's chorus "O now carry me to Bethlehem..."

We too can make a journey - not only at Christmas but at any time of the year - to gaze in awe and wonder, to open the eyes of our hearts, to accept that this child who came is the Prince of Glory and through him we have spiritual riches and forgiveness beyond our imagining.

Hymn: StF 216 See him lying on a bed of straw

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:
*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.*

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:

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:

Mine are riches from your poverty,
from your innocence, eternity;
mine, forgiveness by your death for me;
child of sorrow for my joy:

Michael Perry (1942-1996)

Prayer

Advent God,
we journey with you,
to Bethlehem's stable
and a new-born King,
ears attuned to the song of angels,
eyes alert for Bethlehem's star.
Forgive us if on our journey
we are distracted by the tempting offers of this world.
Keep our hearts aflame with the hope of Christmas,
and the promise of a Saviour.

Amen

www.faithandworship.com

Reading - Micah 5:2, 4

Reflection

Bethlehem was a back-water, a small little town - in fact to call it a 'town' was probably an exaggeration. Today it is a busy bustling metropolis, mostly fuelled by the pilgrimage trade - yet still, Bethlehem both past and present remains perhaps a surprising place setting for the amazing event of the incarnation.

Bryan Yardy has chosen "O little town of Bethlehem" for this service, a carol which in his words "encapsulates the Christmas message". Perhaps a part of that message for us today is that even in the most unexpected places - even in our own hearts - Christ can be born today. Wherever "meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in".

Hymn: StF 213 O little town of Bethlehem

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.

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.

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.

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!

Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

Prayer

Unlooked for, Christ comes.
To shepherds,
watching their sheep through the long, dark night, he
comes with the glory of the angels' song
and in the humility of the manger.
Silence

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.
Silence

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.
Silence

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.

Silence

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.

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Reading - John 1:1-14

What better way to finish than by reminding
ourselves of the words from John's prologue - the
true meaning of Christmas is to celebrate that "The
Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only
Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and
truth" and to remind ourselves that he comes to us
still today.

Immanuel - God is With Us!

Our final carol is chosen by Sean Turner, and is a
favourite of many - O come, let us adore him Christ
the Lord!

Hymn: StF 212 - O Come, all ye faithful

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:
*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

True God of true God,
Light of Light eternal,
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father,
begotten, not created:

See how the shepherds,
summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
we too will thither
bend our joyful footsteps:

Lo, star-led chieftains,
Magi, Christ adoring,
offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;
we to the Christ-child
bring our hearts' oblations:

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
'Glory to God
in the highest:'

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born on Christmas morning,
Jesus, to thee be glory given:
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing:

Latin, 18th century

A prayer of blessing

May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary
and the peace of the Christ- child be yours
this Christmas;
Amen.



Compiled from various sources,
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