

This, and all other Broadway “virtual services” since Easter, are available online at <https://urcwalsall.uk/virtual-church.html> .



## Service for Christmas Day, 25<sup>th</sup> December 2020

*A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, open them has the light shined.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

HYMN: O come, all ye faithful

*If you would like to **sing** this carol, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

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.

*Refrain:*

O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.

2 God of God,  
Light of light,  
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;  
very God,  
begotten, not created.  
*[Refrain]*

3 Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above:  
“Glory to God,  
all glory in the highest!”  
*[Refrain]*

4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n;  
Word of the Father,  
begotten, not created.

*Refrain:*

O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord

*attrib J F Wade*

### PRAYERS

*Let us pray*

Blessing and honour and glory and power be to our God for our salvation, for bringing joy and peace into our world.

Gracious God, we do praise you and thank you that in your great love you have entered the darkness of our world, filling it with your great light. Help us, and all your children, to walk in that light as we worship you this Christmas.

We gather round your manger, wondering at the mystery of your presence on Jesus, and at the love you have revealed through His life and teaching, His death and resurrection. Like Mary, we treasure these things and ponder them in our hearts as we learn to live in the knowledge that you are with us, our Emmanuel.

Forgive us, we pray, that although you have sent your eternal light into our world, we so often choose to live in darkness.

Forgive us that, although you come to us in love, we find it so difficult to love one another. Forgive us, for you offer us the privilege of becoming your children, but so often we do not recognise or receive Jesus, your Son.

God of love, forgive our sins and set us free to worship you, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
**Amen.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

CAROL: I saw three ships come sailing in on Christmas Day  
sung by the church choir during our 2015 Carol Service

*If you would like to **hear** this carol, click the icon on the webpage.*

#### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Hebrews 1: 1-3

**1** In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.

St John 1: 1-14

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God; <sup>3</sup>all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup>The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. <sup>11</sup>He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

*Thanks be to God.*

HYMN: Love came down at Christmas

*If you would like to **sing** this carol, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Love came down at Christmas,  
love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas;  
star and angels gave the sign.

2 Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, Love divine;  
worship we our Jesus,  
but wherewith for sacred sign?

3 Love shall be our token;  
love be yours and love be mine;  
love to God and all men,  
love for plea and gift and sign.

Christina Rossetti

ADDRESS: *Mrs Nancy McOnie*

‘ “Christmas won’t be Christmas without any presents” grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.’

Those are the opening lines of Louisa M Alcott’s book ‘Little Women’. The March family were experiencing all the deprivations of living in troubled times during the Civil War in America. Their father was away fighting in the war, and their mother was reminding them that Christmas would not be quite the same as in previous years.

Those words are not out of place in a world celebrating Christmas in very different circumstances today. In fact, I have heard many people say that it won’t seem like Christmas this year: we have to be careful about mixing with families and there has been no carol service with “live” music and singing.

However, although our celebrations may take a different form at present, I can assure you that Christmas will still be Christmas this year! The child born in a manger so many years ago is still ‘Emmanuel’: God with us today. Jesus is our living Lord. He shares with us in all that we experience at this time and makes His home in our hearts.

There is no permanence for any of us here on earth, no certainty that Christmas should always be celebrated just as we have always done. I don't suppose it was quite what Mary and Joseph had planned when Jesus arrived on a visit to Bethlehem, far from home and no rooms available in the inn. No mother would plan to have her first baby in a stable.

Yet in spite of all the difficulties they faced, and although nothing went according to plan, Jesus was born and cared for – and indeed welcomed – by some very unusual visitors. One thing they all agreed on was that He was special. He was the Saviour, the Christ. He was to be worshipped and adored as their Lord.

As John wrote in his gospel, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory". Glory – there in a stable?! Yes, because God came to them there and was born into their world.

What was true for them is equally true for us today. Christmas does not depend on where you are, or how we are celebrating. As John Betjeman reminded us in his well-known poem, the important thing is that

"The maker of the stars and sea  
became a child on earth for me".

And when we acknowledge that truth in our own lives and hearts, nothing compares with the joy and wonder that this day brings us.

Christmas will be Christmas because it is not what **we** do that is important, but what God in Christ has done for us. As John Wesley wrote "Best of all, God is with us".

So come, let us adore Him – and welcome Him into our lives and into our hearts today.

Amen.

#### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Let us pray*

Gracious God, you know the needs of all your people. You left your glory behind to come into our world and share our lives. You understand our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears; all this is in our hearts and is in your heart also.

You came into the world as the Prince of Peace. Hear our prayers for the world today. May there be lasting peace in all the troubled areas; where there is conflict and hatred, may there be love and harmony.

Give peace in the lives of all, peace in our land, peace among the nations, peace in our homes and peace in our hearts today.

Lord Jesus, you were born to Mary as part of a human family. Bless our homes today with your loving presence. May we know that you are with us – and with our families and friends. May there be love shared amongst us even as we observe the present restrictions.

Lord Jesus, you became human that we might share in the divine. We pray for all who are finding faith difficult at this time; all who are depressed, the lonely and all who mourn the loss of a loved one.

We pray for all who are refugees, the homeless and those who live on the streets.

We pray for all who suffer pain and illness – and for those who care for them.  
We give thanks that you have opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.  
We pray for our loved ones departed from us, that they may rest in your presence and peace. May we be found worthy to share with them the joys of your eternal kingdom.  
We ask these prayers, together with the unspoken prayers of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

CAROL: Hark! The herald angels sing

*If you would like to **sing** this carol, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

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 th'angelic hosts proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

*Refrain:*

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King"

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come,  
offspring of the Virgin's womb:  
veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
hail th'incarnate Deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel. [*Refrain*]

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 we no more may die,  
born to raise the things of earth,  
born to give us second birth. [*Refrain*]

Charles Wesley

**BLESSING**

*Let us pray*

May He who by His Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, grant you the fullness of inward peace and goodwill;  
and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest upon us and remain with us and with all whom we love, evermore.

**Amen.**