

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Sandra Rose. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Call to Worship

Praise the LORD, all you nations;
extol him, all you peoples.

For great is his love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.

Praise the LORD.

Hymn: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (Singing the Faith 202)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe6X7PyCKDY>

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.'

*Hark! the herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born King.*

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:

*Hark! the herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born King.*

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.

*Hark! the herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born King.*

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayer of Adoration and confession

Almighty God,
at the start of a New Year we do what we always do –
we gather to seek Your grace for the time that lies ahead,
Your wisdom for its puzzles,
Your strength for all that will challenge us.

Lord God,
You build up Your people,
You gather the outcast,
You heal the broken-hearted and bind up their wounds.
You are the kind of God we long to know, and to know better.
You are the kind of God who deserves everything we have to
give.
You number the stars,
You know them by their names,
yet You also know each one of us.
We have gathered to praise You, to listen to You, to find new
strength in Your service.

Holy Father,
in Your Son Jesus Christ we are perfect,
tasting already the joy of heaven,
wonderfully in harmony with You and with one another.
But in ourselves we are still messing up,
living as if You had not sent Your Son to save us.

We confess our sins, and the sins of this community and
nation, before You.
Heal us, change us, redirect us, sort us out, that we may live
before You
and before the world in newness of life,
humbly rejoicing in the new life of Christ.

Lord God,
You have wonderfully created the world,
that over millennia it might grow to develop and sustain
human life.
While You occupy the wind and water, and can be seen
everywhere,
You are greater than nature;
You delight in all You have made;
You take pleasure not so much in the strength of a horse, or
the speed of a car,
but in the obedience of Your people,
and in those who hope in Your steadfast love.

How should we hope in that love unless You teach us,
unless You show us,
unless You reveal Christ afresh to us,
unless Your Spirit occupies our worship, our song, our
scriptures, our response.
That is our desire, Lord,
for our lives to become like a watered garden, like a sweet

symphony, like a lovely poem, an offering from those who delight to serve You, through Jesus Christ, to whom with You Father and the Spirit be honour and glory for ever, Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

He says to each and every one of us,
“Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven.”

Amen

Reading: The Gospel of John 1: 10 – 18

¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Reflection

I wish you all a very happy New Year. Some of you may say ‘How can that be? We still have Covid hanging over us, the threat of, possibly, more restrictions, more lock-down, certainly more mask wearing, more distancing – even the possibility/probability of yet another booster injection – yet we have God. God ever present, always with us. God sent us Jesus – Immanuel – God with us, at Christmas time over 2,000 years ago.

Well Christmas is over for another year. We’ve sung the carols, opened the presents, eaten the turkey, and are now contemplating taking down the cards and putting the decorations away. We’ve celebrated the coming of Jesus and

soon will be thinking about the end of his life, his death and rising again.

Today's reading includes John's Christmas story. Look at verse 14:

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.

When God speaks things happen. Look back at Genesis Chapter 1, verse 3. 'And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.' John equates Jesus with God's word. When Jesus comes things happen. Because of our limitations, God becomes human so that we can see God. In Jesus, God becomes accessible to us. The eternal, immutable God becomes finite and vulnerable in order to become truly available to us.

Because we have seen God in Jesus, we are emboldened both to live with hope as well as share with others the hope that is within us.

Do you ever wish that Christmas would last a little longer? We put in huge resources of time, effort and money for a festival that is over very quickly. We give Easter seven weeks, Pentecost three times that amount. Even Lent and Advent get six and four Sundays apiece, but Christmas is only twelve short

days. With the rise of New Year's Eve as a significant holiday, Christmas gets barely a week of our attention before resolutions and so on claim our thoughts. But these verses remind us that Christmas isn't just a season, it's a way of life. Christmas isn't really over when we reach Epiphany, the season may pass but the hope and life it promises are just beginning.

Christmas reminds us of God's decision to become one of us, to have life like us. We matter to God. Our lives, our welfare, our worries, our challenges are important to God. He wants us to share our worries and challenges, our hopes and joys with him as well as with each other. He sends his Holy Spirit to empower and enable us to reach out to those around us.

This second and last Sunday of Christmas gives us an opportunity to treat it as the first Sunday of a year where we encourage God to come among us, where we act as his messengers and make sure that his light keeps shining in even the darkest of places. I'd like to finish by reading Howard Thurman's poem 'The Work of Christmas'.

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,*

*when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.*

Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God,
at the start of a new year we bring You our hopes for the world
and for its peoples.

Grant us peace in place of strife, a desire for justice instead of
a dash for growth,
the building up of forests not their pulling down,
the cleansing not the pollution of our seas, and in place of
hatred goodwill.

We pray for the Queen, and for all the Parliaments and
Councils of these island in which we live.

Grant them wisdom and courage for this year ahead,
integrity of life, strength in every good resolution.

And for all who lead, in church and state,
grant humble hearts and minds to listen to You and others,
to distinguish the good from the bad, the wise from the
foolish, the fruitful from the empty.

Lord, this year will bring its share of illness and bereavement
and family conflict.

We pray now for those who already face these trials.
May they know Your healing and hope, and the good news of
Jesus Christ

who is Lord of this life and the life to come,
our brother who is human like us,
yet picked up our frail bodies and took us with Him into life
eternal.

May His Spirit bear witness to these things,
to what You are doing in their lives and ours.

Lord, this year many words will be spoken in public in our land.
We take a minute to reflect quietly on what lies ahead for each
one of us,
and to ask Your help and blessing . . .

Lord God, one day we will see all things gathered up in Jesus
Christ:

may we live now and always in the light and love of that.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name;
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. **Amen**

Hymn: In the bleak Midwinter (Singing the Faith 204)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAzQIS4-MpY>

In the bleak midwinter
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone:
snow had fallen,
snow on snow, snow on snow,

in the bleak midwinter,
long ago.

Heaven cannot hold him,
nor the earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
God the Lord Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels
may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air,
but his mother only,
in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the Beloved
with a kiss.

What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb,

if I were a wise man
I would do my part,
yet what I can I give him,
give my heart.

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830 – 1894)

Blessing

May you know how special you are in Christ
and in His service;
and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be with us all, evermore,

Amen

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