

## Christmas Day – Year A

### Christmas Day – 25 December 2022

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank our contributors for their suggestions for lectionary and non-lectionary-based worship services for Christmas Day.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

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## Christmas Day – Lectionary-based service (I)

*Prepared by Rev Muriel Pearson, Minister of St Andrews Jerusalem and Tiberias*

### Introduction

By Christmas morning, in my experience, most people are carolled out. Those who attend worship on Christmas morning are sometimes there because their church family is an important point of contact on what can be a lonely day or because the children have been bouncing around since 6 am and it's a long time until Christmas dinner. To curate something short and informal, which meets the needs of all, is quite a challenge.

Although I follow the lectionary most of the time, on Christmas Day in recent years I have not, preferring to use John 1:1-14. My theme, generally, has been the wonder of a new baby, the fragility, the care needed, and the surprise that God has taken the risk of incarnation...and what that means for us now.

A collection of prayers which I have leant on heavily (my battered copy shows the dates on which particular prayers were used) is *Bread of Tomorrow: Praying with the World's Poor*, edited by Janet Morley and published by SPCK and Christian Aid. (1992) It is all fabulous, but the Advent/Christmas/Epiphany section is particularly strong.

The first piece in the Christmas section, attributed to an anonymous Chilean Christmas Card is:

Wake up  
Little baby God  
Thousands of children  
Have been born  
Just like you  
Without a roof  
Without bread  
Without protection

The other thing that has shaped my Advent/Christmas worship preparation since I was a student minister is a headline from The Herald Newspaper: *Christmas is Cancelled in Bethlehem*. This was from 2000, not long after the start of the second Intifada. The streets of Bethlehem were silent, not in the Victorian glow of the Christmas carol, but because of gun battles and tanks and curfew. Since then I have resolved never to sing 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' without giving the carol some contemporary context.

One piece of context is that the hymn writer Phillips Brooks visited the Holy Land and wrote the hymn in the aftermath of the American Civil War.

When I was researching for this piece, I came across several articles about Phillips Brooks (1835-1893). According to one(1), Brooks was a veteran of the American Civil War which ended in 1865, the year he travelled to the Holy Land. He found in the sleepy fields of Bethlehem and Beit Sahour (Shepherd's Fields) something he never forgot:

According to the story, Brooks travelled on horseback between Jerusalem and Bethlehem on Christmas Eve.

*"Before dark we rode out of town to the field where they say the shepherds saw the star. It is a fenced piece of ground with a cave in it, in which, strangely enough, they put the shepherds. . . . Somewhere in those fields we rode through, the shepherds must have been. As we passed, the shepherds were still 'keeping watch over their flocks,' or leading them home to fold."*

Brooks participated in the Christmas Eve service, writes hymnologist Albert Bailey:  
*"conducted in . . . Constantine's ancient basilica (326 A.D.) built over the traditional site of the Nativity, a cave. The service lasted from 10 P.M. to 3 A.M.!"*

[1] <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-o-little-town-of-bethlehem>

There are a number of contemporary versions of the lyrics. They don't all scan very well, but John Martin Joseph's version has some singable verses.

### **O Broken town of Bethlehem**

Divided we see thee lie  
Above disturbed and troubled sleep  
The stars look down and cry  
But on the streets still shineth  
An everlasting light  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Be met in thee tonight

Where Christ was born of Mary  
Small children live in fear

The razor wire and concrete walls  
Cast their shadows near  
No child plays safe when cluster bombs  
Lie waiting in the ground  
Never so needed at this time  
Is peace to these men on earth

How silently how silently  
These voices are forlorn  
But God imparts to human hearts  
The hope for life re born  
No ear may hear his coming  
But in this world of sin  
Where meek souls will receive him still  
The dear Christ enters in

Oh Holy Child of Bethlehem  
This Christmas time we pray  
May justice rule in this your town  
And walls fall down this day  
We hear the Christmas angels  
Their great glad tidings tell  
The Prince of Peace was born for us  
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Another version of O little Town is by Wendy Ross Barker from the USPG Resource *Born Among Us*, which I prefer:

**O sad and troubled Bethlehem**  
we hear your longing cry  
for peace and justice to be born  
and cruel oppression die.  
How deep your need for that  
great gift of love in human form  
Let Christ in you be seen again  
and hearts by hope made warm

While morning stars and evening stars  
shine out in your dark sky

Despair now stalks your troubled streets  
where innocents still die  
and Jesus child of Mary  
whose love will never cease  
feels even now your pain and fear  
longs with you for your peace

Amazingly and lovingly  
Jesus the child has come  
and brought to birth through human pain  
makes broken hearts his home.  
He comes to comfort all who weep  
to challenge every wrong  
and living with the weak and poor  
becomes their hope, their song.

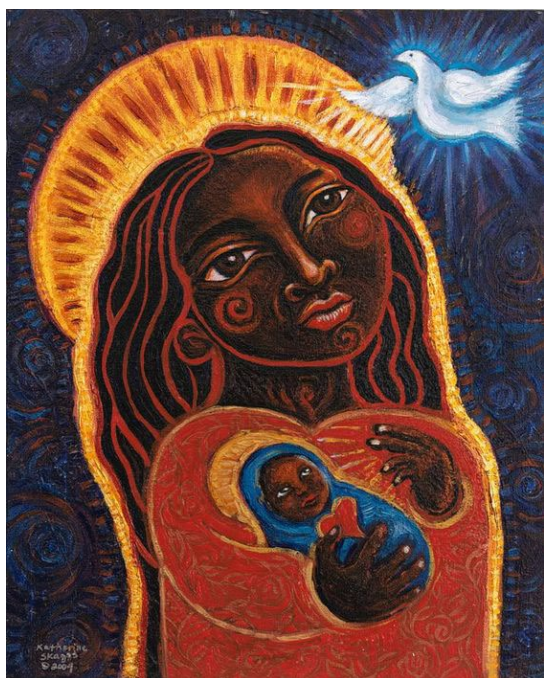
Amos Trust and Christian Aid are very good sources of up to date information about life in modern day Bethlehem, under Occupation, behind a Separation Barrier with severe restrictions on movement and very high unemployment.

USPG has a resource called *Liturgical Resources from Around the World for Advent and Christmas*.

<https://d3hgriq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/uspg/content/pages/documents/1605522103371652283.pdf>

A few years ago they produced a wonderful visual pack of images of the Nativity from Around the World. It is now out of print, sadly. But you could perhaps find your own by searching the internet.

I have often used images of Mary, particularly an African Mary for reflection. (Half the congregation in my former parish of Cranhill were African, mainly from Nigeria.)



Black Madonna by Katherine Skaggs

The usual shape to a Christmas Day service when I was in Cranhill was as follows:

- Call to worship (shared)
- Hymn
- Prayer
- All Age Introduction to theme
- Reading
- Hymn
- Reflection/conversation
- Offering
- Prayers for others
- Hymn
- Sending (Shared)

This year, in Tiberias in Israel, I have no idea what form worship on Christmas Day takes. I'll need to ask folk what usually happens. I know there is usually a service, but with a small gathered congregation who often have family commitments, I might suggest using Zoom and posting it on our Facebook page and church website so folks can access it when they are able.

Maybe as a reversal to previous years I will start in Bethlehem, Palestine and travel to other 'Bethlehems' around the world where a child is born into poverty and struggle while the

angels sing 'Glory!'. This will involve collecting news stories and images from around the world.

I try to make things accessible to everyone and include children in any conversations. I have on occasion told a story or used a story book, or made a PowerPoint, using illustrations from a story book.

### [Isaiah 9:2-7](#)

Whenever folk are asked what they long for, 'peace' quickly emerges as a theme. The passage from Isaiah has some resonant and familiar phrases relating to peace: light shines, joy reigns, endless peace is promised, with justice and righteousness. And yet the context for this promise is oppression, bloodshed, occupation. The juxtaposition is stark. I notice that the promised saviour is not another army but a child. This makes me think of the vulnerability, the risk taken by God-with-us: Immanuel.

### [Psalm 96](#)

The Psalm of the Day speaks of God coming to judge with righteousness. It reminds us that we are currently caught between two Advents. The one we call the birth of the Saviour and the second coming, when God will come as Judge. I notice creation: earth, heavens the trees rejoicing. I notice an offering is called for which reminds me of the Magi. I notice the global significance of God's coming and I notice a new song is required. This could lead to a conversation (instead of a sermon) about what a new song of praise to God might say. I have on occasion used a flip chart to collect folks' ideas as a way of writing a collective poem or new song. And I think this would lead naturally to prayers of intercession.

### [Titus 2:11-14](#)

An extended reflection or poem on the grace of God with images of newborn babies, and other ways grace is shown might work well.

Again, the theme of 'already and not yet' comes through. Every Christmas the TV ads, current world news and the mood and concerns of individuals and congregation mean the Season is familiar yet unfamiliar. Now that Christmas Day is here, the waiting is supposed to be over, but the reality is the world still waits and still groans for deliverance. A good conversation might be had around the questions, 'What has this Advent waiting meant for you? What have you noticed? What thoughts/feelings have struck you?' 'Where have you experienced grace this Christmas time?'



Salvation (v11): healing, wholeness, well-being. You might play a piece of soothing music or Taizé chant while inviting people to doodle, or colour in or write a prayer around the theme of healing and wholeness.

## [Luke 2:1-20](#)

With such familiar words, one effective technique is to slow the reading right down and to insert some wonderings or questions.

Lectio Divina is a good method for eliciting a collective response by reading the passage slowly twice and then asking the congregation which words and phrases spoke particularly to them on this occasion.

Reading with imagination asks readers to picture the scene (so familiar from so many Christmas cards and religious images) and to imagine themselves into the scene...who do they identify with? Who do they stand beside? What do they notice as they look at the manger and the new infant from that perspective?

Another technique is to have people together re-tell the gospel story from memory. It is interesting to see what is emphasised and what is left out

## **Prayers**

There are so many great collections of prayers that looking back over past orders of service I find I have relied often on the words of others in *Cloth for the Cradle*, or *Hay and Stardust* by Wild Goose resource Group, or *Shine on Star of Bethlehem* by Christian Aid.

When I choose prayers or write prayers for a service such as this I want to use a natural voice and simple vocabulary but also find a sense of wonder and awe at the birth of a baby, at Immanuel God-with-Us, at the risk of coming close and seeking hospitality: a place to be born today.

### ***Opening responses 1***

He came, so strangely into our world

**So long ago, so poor, so helpless**

He came, and His coming changed our world

**He was an infant, dependent on His mother**

But he was also our God  
**And with His coming a great light has shone**  
On the people who walked in darkness  
**A light that will never be dimmed.**

***Opening responses 2***

A child is born  
A child to save us  
**We celebrate the Saviour's birth**

A child is born  
A child to challenge us  
**We look for Him in unexpected places**

A child is born  
A child for the world  
**Let us receive Him now.**

***Opening responses 3***

God Comes!  
**He's Born!**  
He's here!  
**And every brick and stone,  
each building,  
tree,  
and every child of God  
is filled with heaven.**

Now and for evermore  
**Yes, here in [Cranhill]**  
**and now in our time**  
**Christ is born.**

We light this Christmas candle as a sign  
God comes, is born  
and all creation sings  
**and we add our voices to the Song!**

### ***Opening responses 4***

A child is born

**A child to save us**

A child is born

**A child to challenge us**

A child is born

**A child for the world**

**Come, let's tiptoe to His crib and worship Him.**

### **Prayers**

God, immersed in mystery  
Lord of time and history  
Monarch to whom every knee shall bow  
We find You  
Cradled in a manger  
Now.

God, nappied and with a price on His head  
Nursed in a cattle shed  
God who was there in the beginning  
Midwife of life and love  
Birthed and earthed  
Now.

God who birthed creation  
God whose name Immanuel means God is with us  
God who promised peace on earth  
May we worship  
In our words and actions  
Here and now  
And all for love's sake.  
Amen.

**Prayer** – *John Harvey: Hay & Stardust, p19*

Here we are, Lord;  
We are not many  
Nor are we very wise  
Or powerful  
Nor rich by the standards of the world,  
But we do come  
Singing our praises  
On this special day,  
Because of what you have done.

On this day  
We remember your promises  
That you will never leave us  
Nor forsake us  
That you would show your love for us in a very special way  
That you would always let us know that you love us  
Despite all our fears.

On this day we joyfully remember you  
Creeping in very quietly  
And very vulnerably  
Among us  
In Jesus Christ, born of Mary.  
Born to be with us  
Born to love us,  
Born to save us  
Born to free us.

Help us to come to you now.  
Help us to come to your birthplace  
And your birthday.  
Help us to let you enter our lives.  
Speak your words of power and peace in our hearts  
And change us, once again.

**Prayer – Inside Out?** *Peter Trow: Shine on Star of Bethlehem, p141*

Christmas is outside in!  
The characters in the familiar  
Nativity scene all come in from the outside.  
Shepherds come from outside the city,  
Despised by the righteous people  
Because their work keeps them outside  
The religious in-crowd;  
Outsiders spending their nights vulnerable  
With their flocks,  
No-one to watch over them.

Wise men come,  
Wealthy and learned  
But outsiders too.  
Strangers in a strange land  
Foreigners in odd clothes  
Treated with suspicion;  
'not really like us'.

Mary and Joseph come,  
Galileans, outsiders,  
'Nothing good comes from there you know!'-  
Travellers with no package tour  
No hotel reservations.  
Are they refused room  
Because they speak with strange accents?  
Because they are poor?  
Because she is pregnant?

Jesus comes  
Born an outsider  
Living with outsiders  
Touching outsiders  
Lepers and gentiles  
Sinners and prostitutes:  
Dying as he is born  
Outside the city

On the rubbish dump.

Christmas is for the outsiders:  
The ones who need God with them  
Because they have no-one else;  
Because people fear them  
Shun them, and shut them outside.

Are we outsiders?  
If we recognise our need  
Put aside our self-sufficient pride  
And admit  
That when the darkest night  
Surrounds us  
And we feel the cold draughts  
Of hatred or indifference  
We are afraid and cannot find  
the candle flame within us  
to light our path to safety

if we do this  
then we have  
prepared a place of welcome  
for the Light that comes,  
the Word that speaks our hope and peace,  
the One who opens the door  
bringing outsiders in  
to warm themselves at the fire of God's passionate love-  
and Christmas is for us.

## **Musical suggestions**

- CH4 295 – “Who would think that what was needed”
- CH4 304 – “O little town of Bethlehem” (with alternative words, see above)
- CH4 306 – “O come all ye faithful”
- CH4 308 – “Behold the great Creator makes” (I love the words, but choose a different common metre tune, e.g. CH4 555 Amazing Grace)
- CH4 311 – “Jesus is born”
- CH4 314 – “Child in the manger”

- CH4 316 – “Love came down at Christmas”
- CH4 320 – “Joy to the world!”
- CH4 329 – “O little Love, who comes again”

And, of course, songs that children enjoy:

- CH4 302 – “It was on a starry night”
- CH4 310 – “See him lying on a bed of straw”
- CH4 312 – “Away in a manger”
- CH4 321 – “Come and join the celebration”
- CH4 359 – “He came down”
- A suggested playlist of songs for Christmas can be found online here:  
<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/inspire-me/playlist/christmas>

## Christmas Day – Lectionary-based service (II)

*Prepared by Rev Erick du Toit, Minister of Kirkliston Parish Church*

### Introduction

In general, our 10am Christmas Day service is well attended. We try to keep it relatively informal, building on the back of our Christmas Eve Messy Church family service. We're mindful of the fact that this season will be a difficult time for those who have lost loved ones over the year(s), so we try and be as inclusive as possible in our liturgy to create the sense that we are *all in God's family*, regardless of age, sex, political affiliation, etc.

This year, we will once again encourage members to wear comfortable clothes, and if they feel brave; to wear their jammies! It's been a tradition at Kirkliston Parish Church for the minister to appear in a *onesie!*

Our ministry team will endeavour to recreate the feeling you'd get the moment you wake up to rush down to the living room to join your siblings and parents under the Christmas tree. Our hall will be covered in a few blankets/mats and cushions for those able to casually sit on the floor. Hot chocolate will be served, and worship will be led by a small team of musicians – probably with piano and acoustic guitar.

Young and old will then be encouraged, as part of the liturgy, to show and share their favourite gift.

This will serve as a timely reminder that Jesus remains the greatest gift the world has ever received and that we, as Christians, can share this gift of love with our friends.

### Lectionary passages

The readings for this service are [Isaiah 62:6-12](#); [Psalm 97](#); [Titus 3:4-7](#); [Luke 2:\(1-7\), 8-20](#)

The main themes I take from our readings are gratitude and joyfulness, ranging from the hope and expectation of a future Redeemer and King to songs of praise as the expected Messiah has finally emerged.

I'll focus on the Titus 3:4-7 passage and draw from the Luke 2 Narrative.

Titus is classified as one of Paul's Pastoral Epistles dealing with church discipline and heresies within the church communities. The letter urges Titus to appoint worthy elders to



positions of responsibility, to preach sound doctrine, and to exemplify in his own life the virtues that are expected of all Christians. It warns against the disruptive influence of “Jewish myths” and teachings put forward by “those of the circumcision.”

I love the theological flow and Christological centeredness of this pericope. Verse 3 talks about the human condition as: *‘living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.’* And then, the BIG ‘but’ follows in verse 4. Christ is personified as *‘kindness and love appearing’*. I find that refreshing. We are then saved, not because of righteous living of adhering to laws and regulations, but because of ‘His mercy.’

How incredible that we see the Trinity at work here, to save not only Titus and his community, but humanity, too.

- We are renewed and rebirthed by the Holy Spirit.
- Whom God the Father poured out on us generously,
- Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

This leads to great joy and thankfulness, knowing that we can but receive and accept our salvation. Nothing we do can make God love us less or more.

Having the hope of eternal life changes the way we deal with pain and suffering. Amidst turmoil and hurt we can experience joy for God has established our salvation through the Birth of God’s Son, Jesus. Immanuel – God with us.

## Prayers

I like to include Bible passages in prayers. Here, for example, I tapped into Philippians 2 for a portion of my prayer. I tend not to overthink my prayers and see it as more conversational and therefore, try to keep it simple and straightforward, not going back to edit and amend as much as I would a sermon.

### **Prayer for an all-age service:**

Heavenly Father,  
on this day,  
Christmas morning,  
we are filled with awe and wonder  
that the King of the Universe  
would allow His humble heart  
to touch the hearts of all around the world.

We thank You for giving us the best gift of all –  
Your presence: Jesus.

That You made Yourself nothing,  
Taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

It's almost unbelievable that You were willing to do this.

Why though?

Why would You go through the trouble?

To seek the lonely and lost?

Those without gifts or family?

Could this be the definition of love?

To give hope to the hopeless?

To restore the broken?

I know this to be true:

You give life and You sustain it.

When I unwrap gifts today,

may I know the greatest gift of all:

the all-embracing

all-knowing

everlasting love

of Christ Jesus – my Saviour.

Born for me and you, and everyone.

Amen

## **Musical suggestions**

- CH4 273 / MP 493 – “O come, O come, Emmanuel”
- CH4 306 / MP 391 – “O Come, all ye/you faithful”
- CH4 316 / MP 451 – “Love came down at Christmas”
- CH4 320 / MP 393 – “Joy to the World, the Lord has come”
- A suggested playlist of songs for Christmas can be found online here:  
<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/inspire-me/playlist/christmas>

## Christmas Day – Non-lectionary based service

*Written by Very Rev Dr Martin Fair, Minister of Arbroath St Andrew's*

### Introduction

This will be my 31st year of creating worship for Christmas Day – in the same congregation – and much of that time was spent imposing on myself an unrealistic demand of coming up with something new and fresh every year. Why did it take so long for the penny to drop and for me to realise that the great beauty of Christmas is that it's the same story every year and that great 'comfort and joy' come from that!

Regardless of the content of the Christmas Day worship, my main intention has always been to bring people together. Just that. We wouldn't contemplate NOT gathering on Easter Day so why would Christmas Day be different ... less important? And bringing people together has always meant the whole church family. One year we even had a family with their baby who had been born the day before, at lunchtime on Christmas Eve! Another year we had a woman with us who, just a couple of hours after the Christmas Day service, was rushed to hospital to give birth to her second child! All very appropriate in terms of the theme!

That principle – bringing everyone together – will continue to shape the service that is offered this year.

### [Luke 2:1-20](#)

While our congregation doesn't as a rule follow the lectionary, there has always been a strong sense of the Christian Year and so the passages used at the main festivals, for example, will hardly differ from set lectionary readings.

And as stated above, in terms of familiarity, we have a pattern of readings for Christmas that has been tried and tested and which we'll follow this year too. At our Watchnight Service, the reading is always John 1:1-18 and on Christmas Day, we read Luke 2:1-20.

While familiarity is important, it's important to avoid a sense of 'we've heard all this before...' To that end, the passage will be read straight through from a standard translation and then, after corporate singing, read again from an alternative version. It's amazing to watch people sitting up and taking notice, as if hearing it for the first time.

## Sermon ideas

In terms of 'what happens next', our congregation is in the process of developing something new. On Sunday mornings, we now sit around circular tables rather than in rows. Our intention has been to maximise interaction; to ensure that guests and seekers are part of what goes on; and to create the right environment for participatory worship rather than always passive listening.

With this being the case, Christmas Day worship will include 'table talk' rather than a sermon-style talk. Worshippers will be asked questions such as:

- What word or phrase jumped out at you as you heard the passage read?
- Which character could you most relate to?
- Is there a part of the account that still surprises you?
- The angel encouraged the shepherds with, 'Do not be afraid?' Are there fear factors in your life right now?
- The shepherds could do no other than 'spread the word.' Is there someone you need to share good news with?

## Prayers

We will include two prayers in our Christmas Day worship. The first one will flow out of the Scripture passage and will echo some of the phrases and themes therein. The second will be intercessory in nature. Both will be offered with an all-age gathering in mind and therefore will be shorter rather than longer.

### Prayer 1

It happened in 'these days.'

He came in 'these days.'

And yet He comes now.

He comes in our days.

***Glory to God in the highest!***

There was no room for Him.

Doors were closed.

Today, we say 'Yes!'

Today, we make room for Him.

***Glory to God in the highest!***

Take us from our fields to the manger, Lord  
From our rushing and busyness that we too might worship.  
Show us what You have done at Bethlehem,  
open us to what You are still doing and are going to do.

***Glory to God in the highest!***

In Jesus' name, we pray

**Amen**

## **Prayer 2**

This prayer should be as 'up-to-date' as possible and should take account of the situation and needs both local and worldwide. A response could be built around the phrase,

Jesus, You came into the world –

**Jesus, we pray for the world.**

## **Musical suggestions**

As stated in the introduction, the very familiarity of the Christmas season is what makes it special and so any number of traditional carols are apt. But since losing our long-time organist some five years ago, my congregation has been led in its sung praise by a guitar-based worship band and though some carols work well in that genre, others don't. To fill that gap, we have added a number of more contemporary songs to our Christmas repertoire, with some of those having now become firm favourites.

- Of the traditional carols, we sing CH4 304 – “O little town of Bethlehem”, but to the tune for ‘House of the Rising Sun.’ I can imagine some folk squirming at the thought, but it fits remarkably well and it's interesting how putting familiar words to an alternative tune can cause people to sing it a little less ‘by rote.’

Some years back, the American songwriter and worship leader, Chris Tomlin, released an album entitled [‘Adore.’](#) It features excellent, band-friendly arrangements of various traditional carols including:

- [“Midnight Clear”](#) – to which a new rousing chorus is added. It goes like this:  
“Glory to God in the highest  
Glory to God evermore  
Good news, great joy to all  
Melody breaks through the silence

Christ, the Saviour is born  
Jesus, the love song of God"

- [“Silent Night”](#)
- [“Hymn of Joy”](#)
- [“Noel”](#)

But the same album also includes newer compositions. Among the best of those are [“He Shall Reign Forevermore”](#) [“A King like this”](#). All of these can be found on YouTube and the music and lyrics are easily available.

- Our congregation’s most loved of that Tomlin collection is [“Adore”](#). It’s very singable, is learned in one go, and has a soaring refrain which lifts the congregation from remembering the story to an incredible place of worshipful adoration.  
<https://youtu.be/br-Ql1zVcUc>
- Another more contemporary song which works well is [“Joy has dawned upon the world”](#) from the Getty / Stuart Townend stable.
- A suggested playlist of songs for Christmas can be found online here:  
<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/inspire-me/playlist/christmas>

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

## Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord's Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of 'holy chaos'.
- While singing in our congregations is still restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?  
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/  
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different "Spiritual Styles"?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?  
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?  
Did it function well as a whole?  
How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?
- How balanced was the worship?  
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?  
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/  
community?  
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?  
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?

- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

## Useful links

Up to date information for churches around Covid-19 can be found [here](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)

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