

Tavistock Methodist Circuit at Home

Christmas Day 2021

Welcome

TODAY THERE IS

A Place for All

The Methodist Prayer Handbook for 2021-2022 is called "a Place for All" but in our diverse and divided world

**how many places do we know where any place is respecting that title?**

In our prayers and reflections for **Christmas Day** (above all days) we shall in **quiet** focus our thoughts on the wonderful diversity of people on this planet.

**Prayer to begin:**

Vast, O Lord are our differences  
but one is our unity in Christ  
Many are our faces and languages  
but one is the power of your grace  
Great is our sorrow and pain  
but one is the hope in our hearts.  
Deep in our need of forgiveness  
but one is the source of your love  
Heavy are the chains that enfold us  
but one is the justice of your kingdom.

(Based on a prayer by the Women of  
Guatemala World Day of Prayer 1993)

**Action:** That prayer was prepared and offered in 1993 nearly 18 years ago.  
For a few moments read through the prayer again and reflect on each couplet  
of the prayer. As we enter into a prayer how far do we enter in, make it our  
prayer and consider one action we might take ?

**Remember:** The scientists who spoke of the need to vaccinate the world  
against Covid-19 How many people have been vaccinated. ? How many

*await even the first dose ? How many people refuse vaccine doses which would not only help them but put others at less risk? (I do not ignore those for whom there are very valid health reasons - medicines shouldn't be used wantonly)*

**Prayer: Lord forgive us when through our negligence, ignorance, fear, and sin fail you and your children !**

**The Lord's Prayer:**

**Three Reflections :**

### **1. Christmas Cards**

*On one page of the script you will find a picture of the occasion which according to tradition led God's entry into the world as a human being. That remarkable occasion when the angel visited Mary and she conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit.*

*Christmas is a time for celebration, endless organisation of food. arrangements for present buying, and family visiting, and care of children. What are you having for Christmas dinner (?). Its a day for the children isn't it(!) But recently we have been brought to a stop by a virus. when do we remember that it didn't start as a celebration but as a mystery and an obligation. A mystery for Mary accosted by an angel.*

*Each year it happens - we buy the cards to send and then on Boxing Day there are cards on the mantelpiece from our friends and the one that was going to them is still on our dining room table! All for the best of reasons - we want to write so much that we end up not writing at all! We know some of the ones we received seem to have little real connection with the day but at least they were sent!*

*On the other hand some are not only sent but they 'hit' home. This year this was one of them. An Ikon of the Annunciation - a special kind of picture - penetrating the oil paint into the meaning of the picture. The senders are organisers of Christians Aware - an ecumenical charity based in Leicester which has specialised in linking denominations together through international visits and meetings. They have experience with the Orthodox Church who have particular experience of Ikons - are symbols which speak!*

## ***2. The Journey***

On Christmas Day as we pray for the mixture that is God's World, seeking to break down barriers, giving every child his or her rights, as a person created in the image of God, it could be an occasion when we might [share](#) it with the people who were most involved. - Mary and Joseph - two teenagers - residents of Nazareth - about to be married - who have had a severe unwanted shock. At least most of us would imagine this to be the case.

Un-expected pregnancy for an unmarried couple - in any family group with strong rules leading up to marriage is usually not to be welcomed. In this case they have the further worry of having to undertake a difficult and dangerous journey in late pregnancy - on foot!, over 90 miles of hilly terrain.

Known for wild animals, unpleasant weather and often unpleasant robbers en route, It was wise to travel in groups carrying plenty of food and water and thick clothing to protect them. If they could travel 10-20 day they were doing well. Furthermore they were two in a large group to fill in government tax registration forms. Accommodation was likely to be scarce and contending with a small new born child in the open air was a possibility. And initially even this was the reality - a tired mother after a first labour arrives with her first born - and there is no room anywhere!

Think about Christmas do we ever stop and think about the challenge faced by Mary and Joseph following that appearance of the heavenly visitor?

A little bit of consideration about Mary and Joseph themselves as simple teenagers - recently betrothed! Required by the Romans to undertake at their own expense the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for tax was part of the outcome.

How many people are on unwanted journeys today ?



Annunciation Iconographer: Fadi Mikhail

The angel said to her, Do not be afraid Mary; God loves you dearly. You are going to be the mother of a son, and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and will be known as the Son of the most high.  
Luke: 1: 30-32

### 3. The Gospel Feast



#### A Place for All

**C**ome, sinners, to the gospel feast,  
let every soul be Jesu's guest;  
you need not one be left behind,  
for God has called all humankind.

Sent by my Lord, on you I call,  
the invitation is to all;  
come, all the world and witness how  
all things in Christ are ready now.

*(Singing the Faith 401 verses 1 and 2)*

The back page of the Prayer Handbook has another Ikon - a world held in a pair of hands and two verses of a hymn by Charles Wesley describing God's Feast for His children - **All are welcome. Its an open invitation.**

As we pray for the world should we hold firmly to the contrast between what we aspire to in responding to its need and God's offer in what He has created and ultimately the Gift of His own Son ?

## Hymn to Shout out to the World!

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King!  
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,  
and heav'n and nature sing,  
and heav'n and nature sing,  
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth, the Saviour reigns!  
Let men their songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
far as the curse is found,  
far as the curse is found,  
far as, far as the curse is found.

4 He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of His righteousness  
and wonders of His love,  
and wonders of His love,  
and wonders, wonders of His love.

**Response: And is it true? And is it true,**  
This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,  
A Baby in an ox's stall ?  
The Maker of the stars and sea  
Become a Child on earth for me ?(John Betjeman)

Answer:

YES