

Christmas Eve Watchnight Service 2021

This service will be zoomed at 11.30pm, to worship with us please start at 11.30pm. Please only watch the verses mentioned in the text to keep the timing.

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We gather tonight to wait together,
remembering, reflecting and rejoicing.
We remember the story,
the people,
the lives intertwined within the strands of incarnation,
as God ever present becomes visible.
We reflect on the story,
our own story within it,
and our response to the knowledge of the presence of God.
We rejoice, for in this story is joy,
and in the story that grows is hope,
and all around is love, and love changes everything.
So, tonight we sit and wait for change.

Song O Come O come Emmanuel (Enya)

Listen [here](#)

Prayer

Holy God, on this holy night we sit amidst the glory of your revelation and wait with you as morning comes and the world begins again the celebration of love come down. We give thanks for the story which has embedded itself within our story, for the story of people like ourselves who were open to change and wonder, and whose response gifted the world with a message of love. We give thanks that we can gather and share this moment and share this story with others to enable the change to continue. We have journeyed far, and our journey continues but for this moment we sit and wait, remembering, reflecting and rejoicing in our oneness with you and all creation. Amen

We are ready. The waiting is over. This is the night; it is like no other night.
It is a night to sing and imagine our way to Bethlehem,
a little town amidst the hills, 10 miles south of Jerusalem.
In the centre of the town is a small inn.
On this night it is overflowing with people seeking a place to rest, to eat and to sleep.
Behind the inn is a dark stable where a donkey chews hay and a cow leans and rests.
All is quiet and still.

Hymn O Little town of Bethlehem v 1,2

Listen [here](#)

As night gathers, two travellers slowly come up the road, a woman and a man.
The young woman is heavily pregnant, about to become a mother. She is walking with her husband.
They are Mary and Joseph and have walked from Nazareth.
For six days they have walked to come to this town where King David was born so long ago.
They have come, like so many others, because the Roman Emperor wants to count each one so that he can take their money as a tax.
It's late and Mary is weary. They look for shelter, somewhere to rest, to eat and sleep.
There is no room at the inn, but the innkeeper lets them sleep in his stable with the animals.

Hymn Once in Royal David's City v1,2

Listen [here](#)

Stars brighten slowly in the sky.
All creation holds its breath.
Suddenly, from the stable, comes the cry of a new-born baby.
Mary wraps the child gently in a blanket and lays him in the feed box which Joseph has filled with straw.

Hymn Away in a manger v 1,2

Listen [here](#)

On the hills outside Bethlehem, shepherds are watching their shadowy sheep.
All at once, the dark is lost in light,
and in the midst of the light is something even brighter –
angels, their faces glowing brightly in the night sky.
The fearful shepherds hear music in the sky and then a voice echoes around them,
'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of a great joy –
a joy to be shared by all people.
Today in the city of David, a Saviour is born. He is Christ the Lord.'
More angels appear – a whole heavenly host – praising God and singing,
'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to all people everywhere.'
Their fear gone in the miracle of the moment,
the shepherds run with joy across the fields to Bethlehem to the stable behind the inn.
They find Mary, Joseph and the baby, and creep forward,
overwhelmed with mystery,
to find Nativity itself in the centre of all that love.

Hymn While shepherds watched

Listen [here](#)

Story - On Christmas Night

It was Christmas Eve and all around the village the lights were going off as families settled for the night. Children were fast asleep, minds filled with anticipation, their dreams filled with delights and wonder, all except Joseph. Joseph was wide awake hidden beneath the blanket, his ears listening for the sound for which he waited.

His classmates had been to see Santa, but he had not. His classmates had all written to Santa, but he had not. Joseph lived with his Gran in their tiny house which was filled with love but lacked the refinements of the homes of his friends. The warm glow of the fire in the evening was the only winter decoration, but Joseph was happy, he knew he was loved, and he loved his Gran and their little home.

Joseph lay in the dark waiting. He had heard all the stories of Santa's visit on Christmas Eve, and he knew you had to be asleep which was why he was hiding beneath the blanket, for if it was true, if Santa was to visit, he wanted to speak to him. Time passed and Joseph tried to stay awake, but it was hard, he thought about what he would say, he imagined what might happen and all the while his eyelids grew heavier. The house creaked, the windows rattled and beneath the blanket Joseph waited, and waited. His eyes closed and he slept, and in his sleep he dreamt. Santa crept into his room and before he could do anything Joseph pushed off the blanket and sat up. Santa didn't jump, he didn't shout out, he simply smiled and said, 'Hello, Joseph, I believe you want to speak to me.'

Joseph had lost his voice, but his face beamed in the light that seemed to surround Santa and he nodded. 'What was it you wanted to say?', asked Santa in a deep, rumbly, friendly voice. When Joseph remained silent, Santa sat down on the bed and placing his hand on top of Joseph's he said, 'Don't be afraid, I know what you want to say but I would like to hear you say it.' Joseph drew in a deep breath, he looked Santa in the eye, and in a voice which did not sound like his own and in a rush said, 'I love my Gran and all my friends have got a present for their Gran, but I have no money for presents, so I wanted to swap whatever you are leaving for me for something for my Gran.' When he had finished, he suddenly realised that he had been cheeky, why would Santa be bringing him anything, and why would Santa swap things, could Santa even do that?

Santa smiled and lifted Joseph's head so that he could look at him properly, then he said, 'Joseph, I have left your Gran a present, the thing that she most desires, so please do not worry. Your Gran loves you and understands how much you care, your help and company are her greatest gift. Now close your eyes and go to sleep'. Joseph lay back in his bed and Santa tucked the blanket around him as Joseph's eyes closed. In the morning, Joseph woke up and stretched, then leapt out of bed. Then he remembered, he had fallen asleep, fallen asleep and now there would be no present for his Gran, he sat back on the bed, crestfallen. Then, from the corner of his eye he saw something sticking out from under the bed, it was one of his socks,

but it looked as if it had something in it. He bent down to investigate and from the sock he drew, an orange, some nuts, a small car made from a box, with cotton reels for wheels and painted bright red, and from the toe of the sock he drew a button, a shiny golden button in which he could see his own face. The button reminded him of something, but he could not think what, and then it came to him, his dream flooded back as he gazed at the button, a button from Santa's coat. He remembered the dream so vividly, and he remembered Santa's words to him, he could be his gift to his Gran, he could help her and share his stocking with her and together they would celebrate Christmas.

He rushed downstairs to where his Gran was at the stove making toast and rushing up to her, he hugged her. 'Happy Christmas', he said, and his gran smiled and hugged him close. Then together they sat and ate toast, and orange and nuts. After, Joseph took a small parcel from his pocket and gave it to his Gran. She opened the parcel and found the button, it was like a mirror, and she smiled and said, 'Thank you'. Joseph smiled and turned to play with his little car. They had everything they needed, they had each other.

Hymn Still the night, Holy night

Listen [here](#)

Sit in silence until midnight

Song Like a candle flame

Listen [here](#)

Prayer

On this night when wonder and mystery fill the air we pause to remember, reflect and rejoice.

We remember the story, and think of all who are living rough, or sharing a room with strangers this night.

We think of women awaiting a birth, or lost in the wonder of a new birth, and we think of those for whom tonight is filled with loss, or dread, as they mourn or remember a time of sadness.

Eternal God your presence fills creation, your presence fills the earth, your presence brings hope and joy, comfort and consolation, and always love.

As we reflect upon this story, we are filled with wonder but also questions as we wrestle with the scarcity of fact and yet know this story holds a truth deeper than knowledge. You are present in each birth, each child, each moment, and we are a part of all that is, a part of your creation. We remember the message of Jesus and know, deep within, the truth that we can never be separate from you, or from each other. As we think of those who are struggling with isolation, a reality or a figment of their mind, we pray that they may sense your presence with them and know your love holds as Mary held her new-born child.

As we rejoice, may we be generous in our love, reaching out to friend, neighbour and stranger in their need, and sharing the hope and joy of this night through our actions, our words and our attitude.

This prayer we offer as followers of Jesus, and travellers on the way. Amen.

Hymn O Come all ye faithful

Listen [here](#)

Blessing

May the joy of knowing God, source of all being, overflow from our lives, the light that the Christ shine in our lives and the peace of oneness, our connection in the Spirit, bring us hope this Christmas. Amen