NORTH CHESHIRE METHODIST CIRCUIT

HOME WORSHIP: CHRISTMAS 2026

THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL

Happy Christmas! The waiting is over; the journey of Advent is completed.

Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Luke 2: 4-7

Joseph went from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem, the birthplace of King David, because he was descended from the house and family of David, to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him.

Mary was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, she gave birth to her first-born son, she wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger - there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

But wait! Where is the warm crib?

Where is the comfortable home?

Can a child born into a humble family, in a smelly cattle shed, be the One we have been waiting for?

Can he be the Son of God?

HYMN

Life rarely turns out as we hope or expect. But the unexpected situation of this child shows us much about God.

A willingness to become human, with all its vulnerabilities; a commitment to the poor, refugees and those whose life is s struggle; unconditional love.

This child is the greatest gift God could ever give us. The Light of God has come into the world, a Light that has never gone out.

Hark! The herald angels sing
Singing the Faith 202
Video: https://shorturl.at/h9KoG

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.

PRAYER

Loving God, for the gift of Jesus: **We give you our thanks.**

For the willingness of Mary to bear the child: **We give you our thanks.**

For Joseph's acceptance of the situation: **We give you our thanks.**

Despite there being no room in the inn the holy family found shelter: **We give you our thanks.**

For the shepherds, the first visitors to see the newborn babe, who left joyfully and told others about all they had seen and heard: **We give you our thanks.**

In the name of Christ, we offer our thanksgiving.

Amen.

READING

Luke 2: 8-20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,

> *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."*

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying:

> *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."*

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

A SHEPHERD'S STORY

My name is Latham; I'm a shepherd where I help watch sheep on the hills outside of Bethlehem. I'm on watch and to help pass the time I'll tell you a story, it's a true story that happened a few years ago. It might be hard to believe, I must admit, but cross me heart it's true, I know 'cause I was there.

Us shepherds were out on the hillside, the weather was dry and cold. Apart from Joshua, we was all asleep and I was having this lovely dream about angels and I could hear this wonderful singing. Suddenly, someone was shouting at me to wake up. I stirred myself and realised I could still hear the singing. I opened my eyes and saw the brightest light I had ever seen.

‘Look, look, angels’, Joshua was shouting, then we heard this amazing message about the Messiah being born in Bethlehem. We were told not to be afraid, that it was ‘Good news’, and we would find the child wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

Then the angels all began singing at once, then, in an instant they were gone.

I’ll admit I was frightened and I went and hid behind a rock, but the others were all talking together so I grabbed my blanket and went and sat with them.

‘Whatever is happening?’ ‘Can it be true?’ ‘Was it all a dream?’ ‘What shall we do?’ ‘Can we risk leaving the sheep?’ A hundred questions.

Eventually the decision was made, we would go to Bethlehem and find this child. As we made our way down the hillside I wondered however could the Messiah be born in such a small insignificant place like Bethlehem, there wasn’t even one house that would be fit for the Messiah.

Fit for a Messiah or not, we found the baby and his parents, just like the angels said we would. The child was wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in the animal trough. It was amazing to be there, to experience this little babe lying among animals and poor shepherds. I never said a word of course but as I looked into the make shift crib and look the baby’s hand in mine, I was filled with wonder although I didn’t understand it at all.

Later, as we made our way back to the hillside, hoping the sheep would still be there, I shivered and realised I’d left me blanket behind in the stable. I were about to turn back but thought the baby probably needed it more than me.

I got into trouble for losing my blanket and had to wait a whole month before I got a new one.

Now I’m older, when I look back at the events of that night, I feel very blessed to have been there at the beginning of this little one’s life. I’ve told many people about it, some have believed, others have dismissed it. I know it’s true that God gave us the gift of his Son. I hope you do too!

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HYMN

Come and join the celebration
Singing the Faith 196
Video: https://shorturl.at/QXy0C

Come and join the celebration, it’s a very special day;
come and share our jubilation, there’s a new King born today!

See the shepherds hurry down to Bethlehem,
gaze in wonder at the Son of God who lay before them:
Come and join the celebration, it’s a very special day;
come and share our jubilation, there’s a new King born today!

Wise men journey, led to worship by a star,
kneel in homage, bringing precious gifts from lands afar, so,
Come and join the celebration, it’s a very special day;
come and share our jubilation, there’s a new King born today!

God is with us,' round the world the message bring,
he is with us, 'Welcome,' all the bells on earth are pealing:
Come and join the celebration, it's a very special day;
come and share our jubilation, there's a new King born today!

PRAYERS

As we give thanks for the greatest gift God has given us,

may we remember that this small, vulnerable child is at the heart of Christmas:

We pray for those who have never heard the story of God's love for all humanity.

We pray for those who have no one to celebrate with,

those who are homeless, those in debt, those living in poor accommodation,

those worried about their health, their family or friends,

those who are ill, the dying, the bereaved and the lonely.

We pray for those having to work over Christmas,

those separated from loved ones far away,

those who feel life is hopeless without any real purpose.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

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.**

BLESSING

Whoever you are, wherever you are, whether you are with family, or friends, or you are alone this Christmas, may you know God's peace, love and blessings in your hearts and lives, this day and always.

Amen.

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Our thanks to Deacon Lyn Gallimore for the provision of this worship resource, for use at home and in church.

Insert Church CCLI number:

If you no longer wish to receive these services, please contact Rae Denley-Samson on 07394 361999 or email at circuitsupport@ncmethodists.uk