

CHRISTMAS FOR EVERYONE



# THERE IS ALSO ROOM



WORSHIP RESOURCES

The **Methodist** Church 



# THERE IS ROOM

It goes without saying that the Advent-Christmas season is a busy one for ministers and preachers. But it is also a wonderful opportunity to connect with people who don't normally attend church and who might come to a service in this period. And connecting with this story is a wonderful way to hear the good news.

This resource pack is intended to help you plan worship services to tie in with *There is Room*, the Methodist Church's Christmas campaign.

There are ideas for eight worship services, from Advent through to Epiphany. They work as standalone services, but are even better if you run them all in order.

Each one contains lots of ideas as a menu to pick from:

- Theme – There is room for \_\_\_\_\_.
- Nativity character – one of the characters from the *There is Room* leaflet. (The Wise Men appear in a somewhat unusual chronological order, but roll with it!)
- Songs and hymns – some extra ideas to complement the usual carols.
- Scripture passages – taken from the lectionary, mainly focusing on Isaiah (which are also a flashback to 2022's Bible Month). Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org>
- Video story – how some people made room in their life.
- Hands-on activities – fun, intergenerational activities that will make your services pop.
- Prayer ideas.
- Questions – these can be worked up into a sermon or used in a discussion. They would also work in a small group.
- The good news to get across – the key idea to land, particularly for newcomers. Say it several times, make it stick!
- Ways people can respond – a simple, non-threatening way for people to respond personally to the good news.
- The final service explores the theme of the epiphany – though we recognise that Epiphany Sunday is on 1 January.



	Date	Title	Character	Old Testament	New Testament
Advent 1	27/11/22	There is room for you and me	You and me	Isaiah 2:1-5	Matthew 24:36-44
Advent 2	4/12/22	There is room for difference	Wise men	Isaiah 11:1-10	Matthew 3:1-12
Advent 3	11/12/22	There is room for all of nature	Sheep	Isaiah 35:1-10	Matthew 11:2-11
Advent 4	18/12/22	There is room for all ages and genders	Mary	Isaiah 7:10-16	Matthew 1:18-25
Christmas Eve / Crib	24/12/22	There is room for people experiencing poverty	Shepherds	Isaiah 10:1-4	Luke 2:8-20
Christmas Day	25/12/22	There is room for God	Jesus	Isaiah 9:2-7	Luke 2:1-14
1st Sunday after Christmas	1/1/23	There is room for refugees	Joseph	Isaiah 63:7-9	Matthew 2:13-23
Epiphany	6 or 8/1/23	There is room for revelation	Angel	Isaiah 60:1-6	Matthew 2:1-12



# THERE IS NO ROOM

in the Christmas story for  
**YOU ME US ALL**

**God makes room for people: for you and for me.**

You can see all the key players in the Christmas story in this picture. Baby Jesus is at the centre. Christians believe that God became a human being in Jesus. But Jesus wasn't born in a palace, in comfortable surroundings.

Mary and Joseph, his human parents, had to travel to Bethlehem for a census. When they got there, there was no guest room for them. Instead, they had to find room among the animals. Jesus' crib was a manger – the animals' feeding trough.

In Jesus, God found room in the world in a place of humility and poverty. When Jesus was born, God sent angels to visit humble shepherds keeping watch over their sheep in a cold, dark field. God wrote a message in the stars that was read and understood by wise men in a far away land where people worshipped other gods. People working hard for a low wage and people who weren't religious insiders were the first to hear the good news: baby Jesus was God's Son and he was born for all people, including them and including you and me.



# THERE IS NO ROOM

The **Methodist Church** 

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# ADVENT 1

27 NOVEMBER 2022

## THERE IS ROOM FOR YOU AND ME

### Nativity character: you and me

Perhaps you have sometimes felt on the edges of things. Perhaps you are not religious. Perhaps you are struggling with the cost of living or see people close to you struggle and wish things were different. Perhaps you are young and sometimes feel patronised.

Perhaps you are older and sometimes feel ignored.

The Bethlehem stable has room for all people – including you, including me. Every single person is

part of this story. God wants all of us to take our place and receive love, wholeness and peace. How does knowing that there is room for you in God's story make you feel?



### Bible readings

#### Isaiah 2:1-5 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVue))

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come

the mountain of the LORD's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains  
and shall be raised above the hills;  
all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say,  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob,  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;  
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the LORD!





### **Matthew 24:36-44 (NRSVue)**

“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

### **Songs and hymns**

As servants working an estate (*Singing the Faith (StF) 491*)

Come, my table is a meeting place (*StF 581*)

Come, sinners, to the gospel feast (*StF 401*)

Darkness like a shroud covers the earth (*StF 170*)

O God of hope, your prophets spoke (*StF 708*)

Praise to the God who clears the way (*StF 183*)

There's a light upon the mountains (*StF 188*)

There's a wideness in God's mercy (*StF 416 especially v3*)

We come from the mountains, the valleys and plains (*StF 417*)

Behold, the mountain of the Lord (*Hymns & Psalms 50*)

Come all you vagabonds (Stuart Townend)

[www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/vagabonds/](http://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/vagabonds/)

### **Video story**

Download from [www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-1](http://www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-1)

### **Hands-on activities**

Make a papier-mache mountain and add LEGO figures.

Using large cardboard boxes, challenge the group to build as big a room as possible. Encourage everyone to make it together. Is there a way to build it so everyone can be inside? How can it be adapted to make this happen?



## Prayer ideas

Pray together inside the cardboard box room (see *Hands-on activities* above): Get people to call out their names and at the end, give thanks to God that there is always room for every one of us.

## Questions for discussion

- Why does God want all people to come together?
- What does it mean in an increasingly divided society and world to turn swords into ploughs?
- Do you feel that there is room for you in God's story?

## The good news to get across

There is room for you in God's story – you, as you are, were loved by God from the start. And everyone else is too, no matter how different.

## Ways people can respond

Talk to a neighbour and discuss the questions above.

Take an action: Place a figure on the model mountain to represent yourself (see *Hands-on activities*, above, or make a large paper mountain with newspaper).

Find out more/follow up with one of the church leaders.



# ADVENT 2 4 DECEMBER 2022

## THERE IS ROOM FOR DIFFERENCE

### Nativity character: Wise men

The wise men travelled a long way, following a star, to find the baby Jesus and worship him. They probably came from Persia (modern-day Iran), and they weren't Jewish like Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They were 'magi', men who studied astrology. This was forbidden for Jews and for followers of Jesus. And yet, God chose to write a message in the stars to these magi and they responded to God's invitation. The Bethlehem stable has room for people of many religious and ethnic identities – even people who might not expect to find themselves there. Have you ever felt like a religious or cultural outsider?

### Bible readings

#### Isaiah 11:1-10 (NRSVue)

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.  
His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see  
or decide by what his ears hear,  
but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor  
and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb;  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid;  
the calf and the lion will feed together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.







They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples;  
the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

### **Matthew 3:1-12 (NRSVue)**

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,  
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is the one of whom the  
prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.’”

Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his  
food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region  
around the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the River  
Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he  
said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?  
Therefore, bear fruit worthy of repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves,  
‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise  
up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every  
tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is  
more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you  
with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his  
threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with  
unquenchable fire.”

### **Songs and hymns**

Because the saviour prayed that we be one (*StF 675*)

In Christ there is no east or west (*StF 685*)

In labour all creation groans (*StF 704*)

Let us build a house where love can dwell (*StF 409*)

Sacred the body God has created (*StF 618*)



Sing we the King who is coming to reign (*StF 185*)

We come today to celebrate (*StF+ website*)

Isaiah the prophet has written of old (*Church Hymnary 4 241*)

## Video story

Download from [www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-2](http://www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-2)

## Hands-on activities

Bring together lots of toy animals and place them in groupings that would make no sense in a zoo – predators and prey; land animals and sea creatures; very large and very small.

## Prayer ideas

Praise God for how uniquely and distinctly each human being has been made, for all our characteristics which combine to make us who we are.

Pick an animal that best represents you. Hold it in your hands. Praise God for how you have been made a unique and wonderful being.

Pick an animal that seems most unlike you. Hold it in your hands. Ask God to help you make connections with others who are different from you.

## Questions for discussion

- Which people groups seem to be your natural enemies? Who are you an enemy to?
- Which people groups might feel unwanted in the Christian church?
- What would it take for us all to live in harmony?

## The good news to get across

The story of God holds together all people, all the world – and even those of us who feel different. We believe that God created all things and therefore is a God of diversity and creativity. In God's vision of the world, all things exist in love, harmony and peace – and the good news is that we are all asked to take our place in that vision.



## Ways people can respond

Talk to a neighbour and discuss: How do you feel different from others? Do you believe that there is a higher power who needs you to take your place in their story?

Take an action: Look at the animals and choose one that represents you. Everyone should bring them up and place them on the communion table – think about what it means for you to be in God's story alongside all the other animals.

Find out more/follow up with one of the church leaders.



# ADVENT 3 11 DECEMBER 2022

## THERE IS ROOM FOR ALL OF NATURE

### Nativity character: Sheep

There are lots of animals in the Christmas story. There are the animals around the feeding trough that became baby Jesus' crib. Maybe some sheep followed the shepherds. The wise men probably travelled on horses or camels. Our lives are interwoven with the lives of the animals and plants which share our planet and whose fate is bound up with our own. The Bethlehem stable has room for all creatures and the whole cosmos: God loves every bit of it. Which aspect of caring for the environment are you most passionate about?

### Bible readings

#### Isaiah 35:1-10 (NRSVue)

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly  
and rejoice with joy and shouting.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the LORD,  
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands  
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
"Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert;

the burning sand shall become a pool

and the thirsty ground springs of water;

the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;

the grass shall become reeds and rushes.







A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,  
but it shall be for God's people;  
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.  
No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.  
And the ransomed of the LORD shall return  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

#### **Matthew 11:2-11 (NRSVue)**

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you.'

"Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

### **Songs and hymns**

God is Love: let heaven adore him (*StF* 103)

Praise and thanksgiving (*StF* 125)

Think of a world without any flowers (*StF* 92)

All things which live below the sky (*Methodist Hymn Book* 852)

See *StF+*'s selection of **Creation Time hymns** and other resources at [www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/themes/climate-and-creation](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/themes/climate-and-creation) (under Season and themes)



## Video story

Download from [www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-3](http://www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-3)

## Hands-on activities

Use air-drying clay or playdough to make a model of your favourite thing in nature.

Invite everyone to plant a bulb in a pot to take home or in a church garden if there is one.

## Prayer ideas

Give thanks for the beauty of the natural world around us and all that God has created.

Give thanks to God for the certain hope we have that God saves us. With the bulb, we might not be able to see what is to come, but trust a flower will grow. So too we trust God is with us.

## Questions for discussion

- Where do you see abundance and flourishing in nature?
- In this midwinter season, much of nature seems asleep, but things are preparing and growing, largely unseen. What is similar in the life and work of this church?
- What do you do that works against nature flourishing?
- Is caring for creation an act of worship? Do you get a sense that creation is worshipping too – and crying for redemption and healing?

## The good news to get across

God's story isn't for a handful of special people. In fact, it's not just for people. God is part of the whole cosmos. When you are hurting, God is hurting. When the world is hurting, God is hurting. God's story is for the whole planet and the whole planet is telling the story of God.

## Ways people can respond

Discuss with a neighbour: When you look at the world around you, what might it be telling you about God?

Take an action: Discuss how making your model and carefully placing it on a table made you feel. Does this tell you anything about how God might feel about creation? Maybe smash one of the models and ask how that made people feel.

Find out more/follow up with one of the church leaders.



# ADVENT 4 18 DECEMBER 2022

## THERE IS ROOM FOR ALL AGES AND GENDERS

### Nativity character: Mary

Mary lived at a time when women were second-class citizens – even more than today. She was very young when she gave birth to Jesus. She might have lacked life experience. God placed great trust in Mary despite her youth. God gave her the crucial task of nurturing Jesus, and loving and protecting him as he grew to be a man who would be good news for the whole world. The Bethlehem stable has room for people whom others overlook. What is your experience of being overlooked?

### Bible readings

#### Isaiah 7:10-16 (NRSVue)

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

#### Matthew 1:18-25 (NRSVue)

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
‘and they shall name him Emmanuel,’”

which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.





## Songs and hymns

God of Eve and God of Mary (*StF* 119)  
Jesus calls us here to meet him (*StF* 28 especially v. 3)  
In labour all creation groans (*StF* 704)  
Long ago, prophets knew Christ would come (*StF* 178)  
Says Jesus, 'Come and gather round' (*StF* 510)  
We come today to celebrate (*StF+* website)

**Mary, joyful mother, resting from the birth** Available in  
[www.methodist.org.uk/media/19727/mmac-christmas-resource2020.docx](http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/19727/mmac-christmas-resource2020.docx)

## Video story

Download from [www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-4](http://www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-4)

## Hands-on activities

Write 10 words that describe you on 10 post-it notes.

Invite people to draw around the hand of someone of a different age. Create a collage of all the hands and thank God for being a community that makes room for all.

## Prayer ideas

Eternal God, we give thanks for our different ages and stages of life. Help us to care for each other well.

Invite people of different ages to pray in pairs or small groups. Each person can share one thing they would like a prayer for. Then spend a few moments praying for these things for and with each other.

## Questions for discussion

- Why did God entrust God's son to a young person with little life experience?
- What's the age/gender profile of the people in charge in this church?
- Is there anything in our culture that makes it harder for any age/gender group to feel important?
- How could God be using you for mission – no matter what your age or experience level?





## The good news to get across

The young woman who gives birth to Jesus might so easily have been written off or written out of history. And yet she is one of the key players in God's story. Have you ever felt overlooked because of your age or gender? The good news is that God sees you and asks you to help out with God's plan.

## Ways people can respond

Discuss with a neighbour: What do you think God's plan is? What part could you play in it?

Take an action: Pick one of your post-its that might be regarded as a limitation on you being involved in mission. How could you reclaim it or reframe it in the light of the discussion?



# CHRISTMAS EVE/ CRIB SERVICE

24 DECEMBER 2022

## THERE IS ROOM FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY

### Nativity character: Shepherds

The shepherds were the first people after Mary and Joseph to know about the birth of Jesus. Angels visited them as they watched their sheep in a cold, dark field. Shepherds were rough-and-ready people: they didn't earn much money and they didn't get a lot of respect. But God chose them to be the first to hear the good news of Jesus' birth. In fact, God often favours people experiencing poverty throughout the Bible. The Bethlehem stable has room for people who have little. What has been your experience of poverty in your own life or in your community?

### Bible readings

#### Isaiah 10:1-4 (NRSVue)

Woe to those who make iniquitous decrees,  
who write oppressive statutes,  
to turn aside the needy from justice  
and to rob the poor of my people of their right,  
to make widows their spoil  
and to plunder orphans!  
What will you do on the day of punishment,  
in the calamity that will come from far away?  
To whom will you flee for help,  
and where will you leave your wealth,  
so as not to crouch among the prisoners  
or fall among the slain?  
For all this his anger has not turned away;  
his hand is stretched out still.





### **Luke 2:8-20 (NRSVue)**

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

### **Songs and hymns**

Child of joy and peace (*StF* 194)

Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes (*StF* 171)

If we claim to love our neighbour (*StF+* website)

In labour all creation groans (*StF* 704)

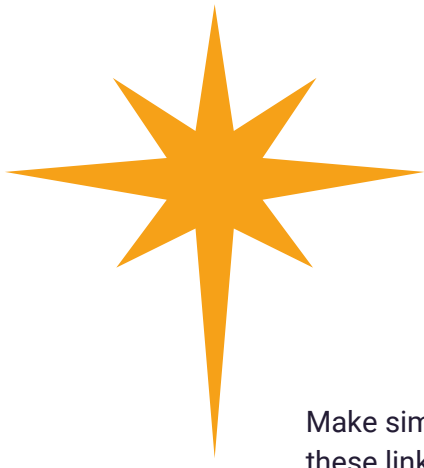
When a young unmarried couple tried to find a place to stay (*StF* 220)

### **Video story**

Download from [www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-5](http://www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-5)

### **Hands-on activities**

Use a model crib and nativity set and gradually add animals and characters throughout the service. Try to infiltrate some posh dolls’ house furniture and get the children to shout “No!” every time they spot something that doesn’t fit.



Make simple folded paper hearts – patterns and instructions are available via these links:

**Paper Heart/Woven Heart | How To Make Beautiful Paper Heart For Valentine's day** at [www.bit.ly/make-a-paper-heart](http://www.bit.ly/make-a-paper-heart)

**How To Make 3D Heart | Origami Easy 3D Heart | Origami 3D Paper heart | How To Make Paper Heart** at [www.bit.ly/make-an-origami-heart](http://www.bit.ly/make-an-origami-heart)

Collect the hearts and give thanks to God before distributing one to everyone present as a model of sharing God's love for all.

## Prayer ideas

At a time when we often give and receive presents, let's be reminded that God's love for us doesn't depend on wealth, what we earn or what we have in material terms. God invites us all to be in friendship, with each other and with God, giving love freely to us.

## Questions for discussion

- Who are our 'shepherds'? Who does the hard, physically challenging, unglamorous jobs in our society?
- Where do we see ourselves in this story? For whom is it good news? For whom is it bad news?
- What is God calling us to do as a result of this story?
- How do we challenge the 'Sunday best' perception of church?

## The good news to get across

God favours people whom others overlook. If you think that you aren't the kind of person God is looking for, this story challenges that. You might not believe in God, but God believes in you. God favours people experiencing poverty, and wants poverty eradicated. How can you join in with God and help?

## Ways people can respond

In a moment of quiet, thank God for loving you as you are.





# CHRISTMAS DAY 25 DECEMBER 2022

## THERE IS ROOM FOR GOD

### Nativity character: Jesus

God found room in our world when baby Jesus was born in the Bethlehem stable. We call this the 'incarnation' – God made flesh and blood in Jesus. But God isn't limited to one place and time. God wants to be born in our hearts too. There is room in the Bethlehem stable for all of us and there is room in all of us for the stable. What might it look like for you to make room for God? Take a moment right now. The divine wants to be born in your heart today. Can you make room?



### Bible readings

#### Isaiah 9:2-7 (NRSVue)

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.  
You have multiplied exultation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.  
For the yoke of their burden  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.  
For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders,  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Great will be his authority,  
and there shall be endless peace



for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

### **Luke 2:1-14 (NRSVue)**

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, **because there was no place in the guest room** (emphasis added).

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

### **Songs and hymns**

Away in a manger (*StF* 191)

Beneath the paper wrappings, there’s an open stable door (*StF* 192)

Deep in the darkness a starlight is gleaming (*StF* 625)

Glory be to God on high (*StF* 199)

In the darkness of the still night (*StF* 109)

Who would think that what was needed (*StF* 222)

Where is the room? (Shirley Erena Murray) © 1992 Hope Publishing Company

[www.hopepublishing.com](http://www.hopepublishing.com)

You left your throne, your heavenly crown (Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown) – various versions available



## Video story

Download from [www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-6](http://www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-6)

## Hands-on activities

Try to make the biggest light possible by gathering lots of different kinds of lights: lamps, candles, torches, spotlights – big and small! Switch them on and invite people to join in with their phone lights. Praise God for the light that Jesus brings into our lives by being born; for how it lights up the whole space and each of our lives; for the light that shines in and on all of us!

## Prayer ideas

Call out the good things that already happened today. Pray in response in a way that recognises that this is all a gift from God.

## Questions for discussion

- What happened when Plan A didn't work out in Bethlehem?
- How do we make room for God?
- What happens when we don't make room for God?

## The good news to get across

God wants to find a place in your life, in your heart. Even if we don't immediately make room, God can find unexpected ways to settle in.

## Ways people can respond

Take the *There is Room* poster and fill in the back if you would like to make room for God in your life.



# 1ST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

1 JANUARY 2023

## THERE IS ROOM FOR REFUGEES

### Nativity character: Joseph

When Jesus was still a babe in arms, an angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him to take his family to Egypt, the neighbouring country. King Herod sent men to look for Jesus and kill him. So Joseph, Mary and Jesus became refugees, fleeing for their lives to another country. They gathered up a few precious possessions and left everything and everyone that they knew, escaping in fear to another country. It was only after Herod eventually died that they were able to come home. The Bethlehem stable has room for people who are made to feel scared and unsafe in their homes. Have you ever felt unsafe or scared?

### Bible readings

#### Isaiah 63:7-9 (NRSVue)

I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD,  
the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,  
because of all that the LORD has done for us  
and the great favor to the house of Israel  
that he has shown them according to his mercy,  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.  
For he said, "Surely they are my people,  
children who will not act deceitfully,"  
and he became their savior  
in all their distress.

It was no messenger or angel  
but his presence that saved them;  
in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them;  
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

#### Matthew 2:13-23 (NRSVue)

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." **Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt and**





# 1ST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS



**remained there until the death of Herod** (emphasis added). This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

“A voice was heard in Ramah,  
wailing and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazarene.”

## Songs and hymns

Amazing Grace (*StF* 440)

‘Come, now, you blessed, eat at my table’ (*StF* 695)

Community of Christ, who make the cross your own (*StF* 681)

Down the road run refugees (*StF+* website)

There is also a wide range of resources in the *StF+* **Refugees and Migrants section** available at [www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/categories/theme/refugees-and-migrants](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/categories/theme/refugees-and-migrants) (Season and themes)

## Video story

Download from [www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-7](http://www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-7)



## Hands-on activities

Give people an A3 sheet of paper to represent a backpack. Draw or write the things that you would pack if an emergency situation meant that you must leave your home. How did this make you feel, knowing that real people are doing this right now?

## Prayer ideas

Welcoming God, we pray for all those who had to leave their homes for many different reasons. Bring them to safety and help them as they put down roots in a new place.

## Questions for discussion

- How do you respond to predictions of forthcoming disasters such as the climate crisis? Is your reaction denial, burying your head in the sand or starting to prepare? Or do you try to avert the disaster?
- Have you ever had to leave your home?
- How can we make a place of welcome and refuge?
- When we break down the borders in our own hearts to make room for others, do we also experience more of God?

## The good news to get across

God's love knows no borders.

## Ways people can respond

What are the borders in your life – internal or external – and what would it mean for God's love to overcome them? For example, we sometimes think of some types of people as different and therefore we exclude them, or we build walls to stop people getting close and hurting us.

Did you make room for God in your backpack? What object represents this? Tell the person next to you.

Find out where there might be organisations or agencies supporting refugees in your area. What could your church do to help them in their work?

There are further ideas and resources available based on the children's book *The Boy at the Back of the Class*. The story is about how one ordinary nine-year-old and three classmates are full of empathy for Ahmet, a boy who comes to their school as a refugee from Syria (he is the boy at the back of the class). Take a look: [The Boy at the Back of the Class resources](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/children-youth-family-ministry/agents-of-change/resources-for-refugee-week-and-beyond/the-boy-at-the-back-of-the-class-resources) ([www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/children-youth-family-ministry/agents-of-change/resources-for-refugee-week-and-beyond/the-boy-at-the-back-of-the-class-resources](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/children-youth-family-ministry/agents-of-change/resources-for-refugee-week-and-beyond/the-boy-at-the-back-of-the-class-resources))





# EPIPHANY

FRIDAY 6 OR SUNDAY 8 JANUARY 2023

## THERE IS ROOM FOR REVELATION

### Nativity character: Angel

Angels appear again and again in the Christmas story. People are going about their lives when the veil between heaven and earth is briefly lifted and a messenger from heaven brings a revelation from God. And God still speaks to people today, sometimes making the ordinary a place of divine encounter. God speaks through dreams; by putting a thought in someone's mind; through conversations with others; and when we reflect on life's events. The Bethlehem stable has room for a story God wants to share with all people. Can you think of a time when God spoke to you?

### Bible readings

#### Isaiah 60:1-6 (NRSVue)

Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.  
For darkness shall cover the earth  
and thick darkness the peoples,  
but the LORD will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
Nations shall come to your light  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together; they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried in their nurses' arms.  
Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you;  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.  
A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.  
They shall bring gold and frankincense  
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.





### **Matthew 2:1-12 (NRSVue)**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### **Songs and hymns**

Darkness like a shroud covers the earth (*StF* 170)

How hard was that journey (*StF+* website)

In this house all people will be welcome (*StF+* website)

Make us your prophets, Lord (*StF* 665)

There is a new heaven; there is a new earth (*StF* 738)

God is good, we sing and shout it (*Mission Praise* 185) (Don Moen)

See *StF+*'s Epiphany resource: **Epiphany – arrivals and beginnings** available at [www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/posts/epiphany-arrivals-and-beginnings](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/posts/epiphany-arrivals-and-beginnings)

### **Video story**

Download from [www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-8](http://www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroomresources-8)

**EPIPHANY**





## Hands-on activities

Set up a station in each corner for the four spiritual styles:

- *Symbol* – different objects such as candles, items from nature, liturgical items
- *Word* – printed copies of Isaiah 60:1-6 to read, reflect on and annotate
- *Emotion* – in a sand tray or using strips of paper, write a word to describe how you feel looking into the coming year
- *Action* – provide a selection of images that represent issues in your local area. Ask which one catches your eye and ask God to help you respond.

Spend some time at each station. Reflect on which you find easy and which you need to develop receptivity to.

Which faith practice would you like to develop this year?

Which aspect of *A Methodist Way of Life* would you and your household like to focus on through the coming year?

## Prayer ideas

Give thanks that God's big story for humankind is ongoing: it is not finished! Ask God to be at work in and through us as we walk forward beyond this season of good news at Christmas.

Invite God to make us aware of the divine moments taking place each day in our lives through chance encounters, people we meet and places we find ourselves.

## Questions for discussion

- What moments of deep spiritual revelation have you experienced?
- The Bible uses the word 'angelos' to refer to both supernatural and human messengers. Who have been human angels to you?
- God spoke to the wise men in a way that they understood. There are lots of ways of communicating. What method works for you?
- What are your tips for being observant, like the wise men? How do you turn off your 'airplane mode'?





## **The good news to get across**

Moments of revelation are open and available to us all – people of faith and none. Wi-Fi routers broadcast signals all the time, but you only connect if you enable Wi-Fi in your settings.

## **Ways people can respond**

In a moment of quiet: what might you do to connect to God this week? Commit to doing it.

**EPIPHANY**





# FURTHER RESOURCES ON ISAIAH FOR PREACHERS

## Bible Month

The Bible Month booklet *30 Days with the Book of Isaiah* contains excellent background information and commentary on some of the lectionary passages covered in this season.

The booklet can be bought from our partners the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust (LPWT):

[www.preachweb.org/books-and-diaries/bible-month-isaiah-30-day-study-course-2g4f2-6me4f-tpzr4](http://www.preachweb.org/books-and-diaries/bible-month-isaiah-30-day-study-course-2g4f2-6me4f-tpzr4)

A free text-only version is available here:

[www.methodist.org.uk/media/24902/lwpt\\_biblemonth\\_isaiah-bw.pdf](http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/24902/lwpt_biblemonth_isaiah-bw.pdf)

## Commentaries on Isaiah

John E. Goldingay, *Isaiah for Everyone*, (London, SPCK, 2015) [Introductory level]

Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *Reading Isaiah: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, (Macon GA, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2016) [Mid-level]

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, (Yale University Press, 2007) [Advanced level]

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, (Yale University Press, 2007) [Advanced level]

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-65*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, (Yale University Press, 2003) [Advanced level]

## Videos

There are two videos giving an overview of the book of Isaiah at <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/isaiah>:

**Watch: [Isaiah 1-39 Bible Book Overview Video](#) | BibleProject™**

**Watch: [Isaiah 40-66 Bible Book Overview Video](#) | BibleProject™**

# FURTHER RESOURCES ON ISAIAH FOR PREACHERS



## Useful websites

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/isaiah/> (includes videos, blogs, notes to help you explore Isaiah)

[www.biblesociety.org.uk/search/isaiah/](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/search/isaiah/) (includes a rich and accessible introduction to Isaiah)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNIVUQqayas](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNIVUQqayas) (Baptist Union GB, first of three videos by Helen Paynter about Isaiah)

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