

Thursday 24th

Steve Cooper

*Saviour of all, Mary's Child,
Walk in our streets.*

Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-16

Isaiah 52:7-10

Luke 2:1-14

Hebrews 1:1-6

What are your traditions for this day? For many it is “starting” their Christmas by watching or listening to Carols from Kings College or attending a Christingle or late evening Communion Service. At the time of writing we are in Covid restrictions, we do not know whether any gathering for worship will be permitted, our church traditions may happen, or they may have to be set aside. As our Circuit Advent Initiative reminded us, “**Covid can’t cancel Christmas**”, nor can any government – because Christmas is not about what John Betjeman called the “fripperies.” It is about God in human form breaking into, and defining, history.

In 2 Samuel ch.7 the settled King David decides that as he lives in a palace it is wrong that that the ark of God should be “living” in a tent. He plans to build a more suitable dwelling place, but God has other ideas! His place is with his people, in their vulnerability and uncertainty.

In the account of Jesus’ birth, we have the scene of the Holy Family travelling to their ancestral town to register in the census. The baby is born there with no comfortable place for his first hours, he is placed in an animal feeding trough for his security. Just as in Samuel, God defies our expectation of the suitable place for God to be found.

Where will Jesus be “born in the night” in you?
Where will you find Emmanuel? And how will
Mary’s child dawn on our darkened day?



Hymn: Born in the Night

Born in the night, Mary's Child,
a long way from your home;
coming in need, Mary's Child,
born in a borrowed room.

Clear shining light, Mary's Child,
your face lights up our way;
light of the world, Mary's Child,
dawn on our darkened day.

Geoffrey Ainger (1925)

Truth of our life, Mary's Child,
you tell us God is good;
yes it is true Mary's Child,
go to your cross of wood.

Hope of the world, Mary's Child,
you're coming soon to reign;
King of the earth Mary's Child,
walk in our streets again.

Thursday 24th

The day before Christmas Eve;
An empty stable
Bare, un-welcoming
sits in an empty church.

Soon the faithful, the curious and the hopeful will
gather.

Soon the church will be filled with warmth and praise:
Soft candlelight, children's voices, the song of the
frosty stars.

And then the stable will be transformed,
filled with glory,
crowded with the Christmas cast
of donkeys and sheep, shepherds and kings,

Mary, Joseph and the Baby,
the Holy One of Israel,
asleep on the hay.

Transform our empty spaces,
O Christmas God.
Fill the empty mangers of the world with food.
Empty the cardboard boxes,
refuge of the lonely and despairing.
Bring warmth and light and shelter
to all who watch and wait this night.

In bar and bare hillside,
in barrio and back room,
in crowded flat and empty home,
may we feel your presence
at our shoulder and in our hearts.

And when the crib is packed away,
The figures carefully clothed in protective covering,
unwrap the swaddling bands,
Unfold the truth,
release the message: an empty stable -
He's not here!
He has risen!

(written by Kate McIlhagga, from "Seasons and Celebrations" compiled by Donald Hilton © Donald Hilton 1996)

Born in the Night
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwiZJqiB4KA>

We pray and remember all who
this day long for stillness and
silence.

For countries at war
For communities in turmoil
For individuals threatened by
abuse and
violence



Wirral Methodist Churches
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