

Service for January 2021

Eternal God,
You sent your Son to be born among us
that we might be born again to newness of life.
Fill us with the gladness of your great redemption,
that as we begin this new year with your blessing,
we may continue it in your favour,
and live all our days as your children
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

[Collect from The Methodist Worship Book]

Let us thank God for what is past and trust him for what is to come
as we sing **from Singing the Faith 470 Lord for the years:-**
<https://youtu.be/Cd14v0e1RWU>

We find ourselves at the beginning of a new year which for many seems even darker, more worrying or lonely than the previous year. We are in the month of January named after the Roman god Janus who was shown with two heads, one looking backwards and the other looking forwards. That seems very appropriate as that is what we usually do at this time. Many people make New Year resolutions. Possibly, as Christians, we look back on past mistakes and vow to do better, make a fresh start.

As I began to think about this service, I found myself hearing the words “in the beginning”. “In the beginning God:” God before the world began, because He created it. He planned the land and water and all the plants and animals that would live and grow and multiply. He created us and lent us this world for our home and gave us the task of looking after it and caring for it. Oh dear we haven’t done very well have we? Let us do better in the future.

Those words are the first to appear at the beginning of the Bible. “In the beginning God”: he was there at the beginning, has been there all the time and continues to be there showering his love upon us.

I also found myself hearing “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

This is how St John’s Gospel begins in the New Testament part of the Bible. Rev. Michaela Youngson says this. “The introduction to John’s Gospel goes far beyond beginning the story of God’s saving love with the physical birth of Jesus. John locates “The Word” with God at the beginning of all things. The very existence of all creation relies on the presence of “The Word” with God. It is the relationship of love that is God’s own existence which provides the spark that brings about creation. All things come into being because and only because, of the creative power of love. This love has no beginning and no end; it brings hope that chases away despair.”

In verse 14 John continues “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” We celebrated that birth at Christmas; the birth of Immanuel, God with us, who is still with us.

In the beginning God and in the beginning the Word or Jesus.....

What about in the beginning or rather at the beginning of our journey of Faith? When we found God who had been patiently waiting for us to find him or maybe we found Jesus first. That first step on our journey may have been momentous, like Paul’s conversion or a gentler awakening to a realisation of what God had done for us.

Our journey is continuous a step at a time. Some of the steps may have been hard but Jesus was walking beside us, sometimes even carrying us like a shepherd carrying a tired sheep on his shoulders.

Let us continue our journey with renewed energy as 2021 enfolds, because we know whatever life throws at us nothing can separate us from the love of God. Amen.

Let us pray:-
Creator God, we praise you
for this New Year,
for this time of worship,

for this moment in our lives.
Creator God, we praise you
for all that you have made,
for all that you have given,
for all that you have promised.

Redeemer God, we praise you
for the new life found in Christ,
for the chance to begin again,
for the story of salvation.

Redeemer God, we praise you
for your grace that is without limit,
for your love which knows no end,
for your living among us.

Sustainer God, we praise you
for the gift of your Spirit,
for the outpouring of your love,
for the fruits of our relationship with you.

Sustainer God, we praise you
for your open embrace of all,
For your infectious joy,
for your presence in our lives. Amen.

[Rev. M. Youngson from “Making the colours sing”]

Hymn 481 StF The Lord's my shepherd

<https://youtu.be/pN4tPkX0MG0>

Closing prayer;
Glory to the Father, the God of love,
Who created us;
Who continually preserves and sustains us;
Who has loved us with an everlasting love,
And given us the light of the knowledge of his glory
in the face of Jesus Christ.
Blessed be God for ever. Amen.

[From The Methodist Worship Book]

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