

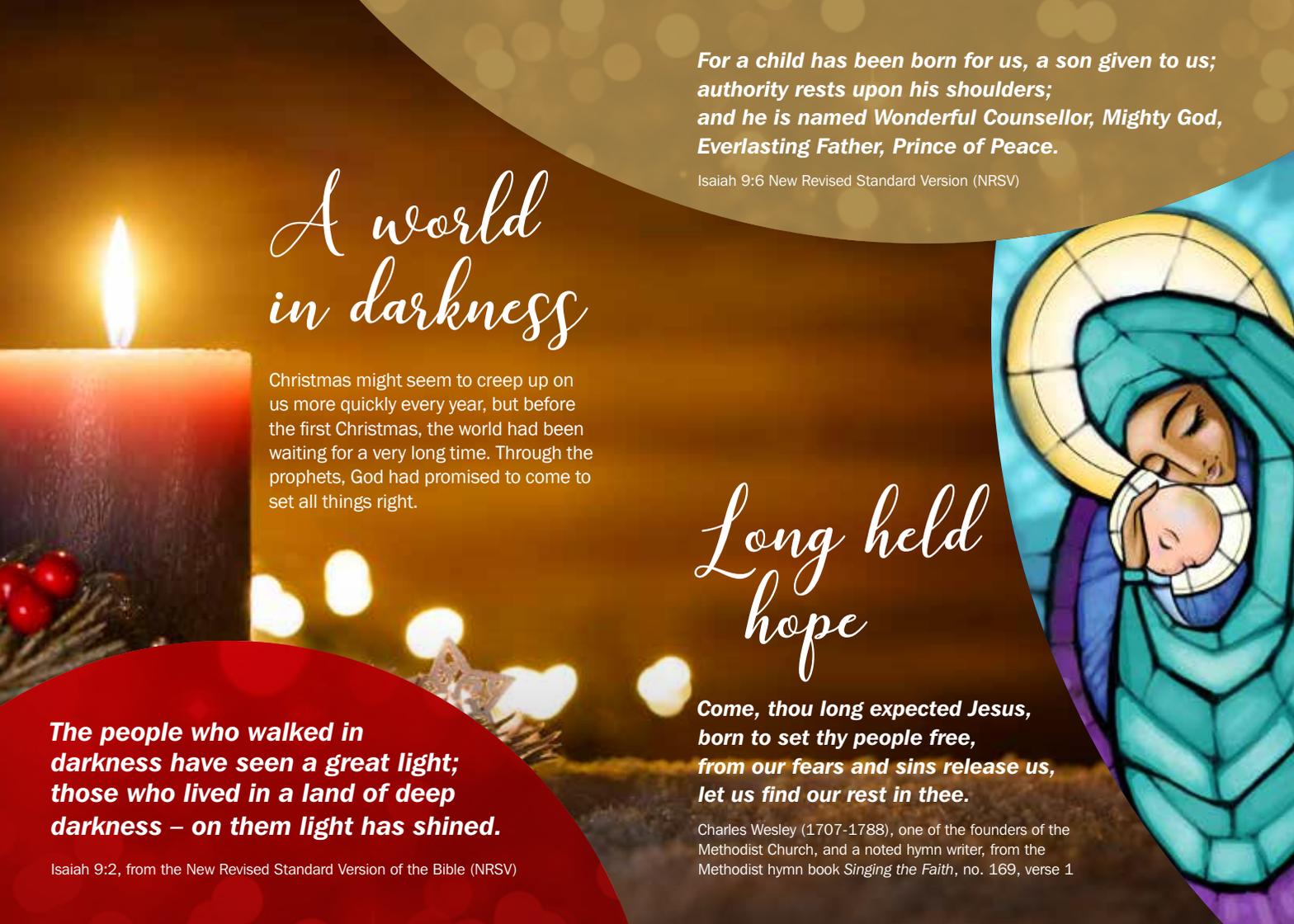
A gift of

The **Methodist** Church 

# Christmas

Christ like (kris'tlik) a  
spirit — Christ'like-ness  
**Christly** (-lē) *adj.* of Jes  
**Christ-mas** (kris'məs)  
CHRIST & MASS || 1 a  
Jesus Christ: also Chr  
ay or Christ'mas-y a  
Christmas cactus a

A gift for you from the Methodist Church.  
We wish you a blessed and peaceful Christmas.



# A world in darkness

Christmas might seem to creep up on us more quickly every year, but before the first Christmas, the world had been waiting for a very long time. Through the prophets, God had promised to come to set all things right.

**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.**

Isaiah 9:2, from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV)

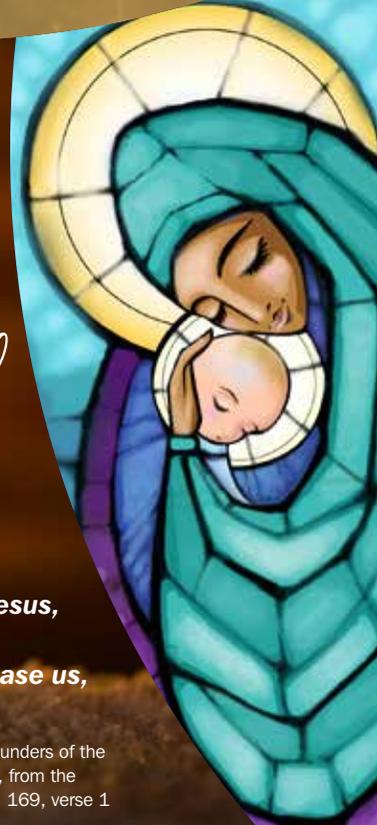
**For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

Isaiah 9:6 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

# Long held hope

**Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free,  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.**

Charles Wesley (1707-1788), one of the founders of the Methodist Church, and a noted hymn writer, from the Methodist hymn book *Singing the Faith*, no. 169, verse 1



# Prepare the way

How would God's people know when the promised Saviour was coming? A special messenger would come before him to call everyone to be ready.

***John the Baptist, by his preaching,  
and by water poured,  
brought to those who heard his  
preaching, news of hope restored:  
"Keep your vision strong and steady,  
and be ready for the Lord."***

Mark Earey (b. 1965),  
*Singing the Faith* 165 v. 3



***See, I am sending my  
messenger to prepare the way  
before me, and the Lord whom you  
seek will suddenly come to his temple.***

Malachi 3:1 (NRSV)

# From humble beginnings

Mary was an ordinary young woman with extraordinary faith. When the angel Gabriel told her she would bear God's son, she praised God because she realised that her baby would turn the whole world upside down.

***"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour...  
He has brought down the powerful from their  
thrones, and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty."***

Luke 1:46-47, 52-53 (NRSV)





# Born into scandal

For an unmarried virgin to be pregnant was an awful social scandal – no wonder Joseph intended to leave Mary. But believing the words of an angel, Joseph stayed and they faced the scandal together.

***Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!  
Hail, the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with  
men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel.***

Charles Wesley (1707-1788),  
*Singing the Faith* 202 v. 2

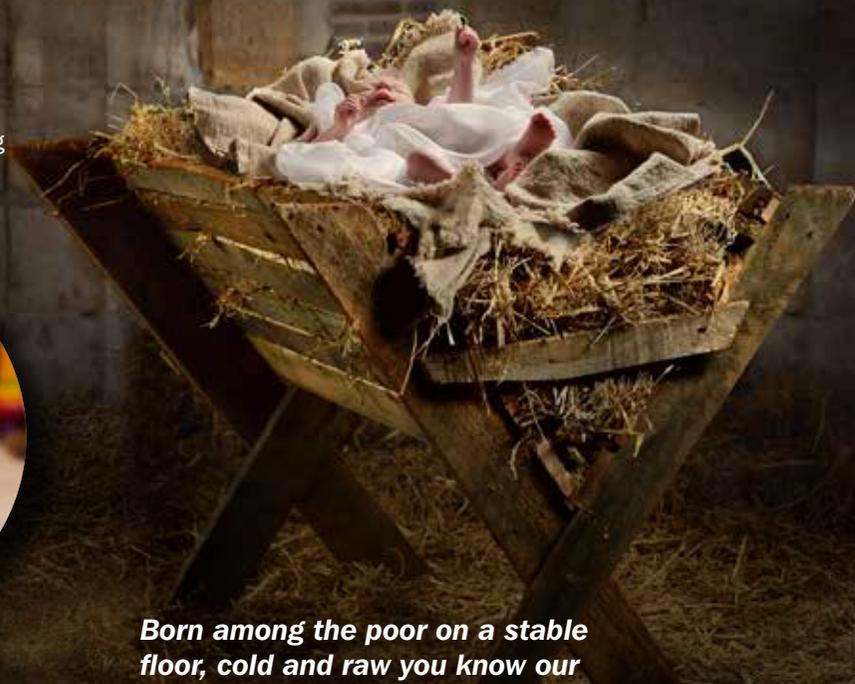


***“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”***

Matthew 1:20-21 (NRSV)

# No crib for a bed

Even from the moment he was born, Jesus demonstrated God’s presence with those for whom society has no room.



***Born among the poor on a stable floor, cold and raw you know our hunger, weep our tears and cry our anger – yet you tell us more, born among the poor.***

Shirley Erena Murray (b. 1931), *Singing the Faith* 194 v. 2

# The unlikely lads

A group of shepherds – rough, tough, dirty outsiders – were the surprising first recipients of the news.

**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 Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”**

Luke 2:10-11 (NRSV)

**Shepherds in the field  
abiding, watching o’er your  
flocks by night, God with  
us is now residing, yonder  
shines the infant Light.**

**Come and worship,  
Christ the new-born King,  
Come and worship,  
worship Christ, the  
new-born King.**

James Montgomery (1771-1854),  
*Singing the Faith* 190 v. 2

# Welcomed to worship



Although shepherds were not the usual guests at religious events, the news did indeed bring them great joy!

**The shepherds returned, glorifying and  
praising God for all they had heard and  
seen, as it had been told them.**

Luke 2:20 (NRSV)





# Visitors from afar

As astronomers from distant countries, the magi were equally unusual visitors. Their long journey following the star reminds us that Jesus brings God's light into the whole world, for all of us.

***Lands of the east, arise!  
He is your brightest morn;  
greet him with joyous eyes,  
let praise his path adorn:  
your seers have longed to  
know their Lord;  
to you he comes, the final Word.***

Charles Earnest Oakley (1832-1865) and Editors of  
English Praise *Singing the Faith* 172 v. 3



# Opposed by power

Not everyone was pleased at Jesus' arrival. From birth until his death on the cross, he found himself hated by those with human power. Why do you think they might have been so afraid of the baby Jesus?

***Now after [the wise men] 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."***

Matthew 2:13 (NRSV)



# God is still with us...

Because of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection all those years ago, we can know his light in each of our lives this Christmas.

***'God is with us,' round the world the message bring, he is with us, 'welcome,' all the bells on earth are pealing.***

Valerie Collison (b.1933), *Singing the Faith* 196 v. 3



*...if we will  
welcome him*

Why not find a moment of two of stillness among your celebrations to reflect on what part faith plays in your life, or what part it could play?

With Jesus' love filling your hearts, may this time of peace and joy be more special than ever for you and all your loved ones.

***O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin, and enter in;  
be born in us today!  
We hear the Christmas angels  
the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
our Lord Immanuel!***

Phillips Brooks (1835-1893),  
Singing the Faith 213 v. 4



*Best of all*

***Best of all is God is with us,  
hearts are challenged, strangely warmed,  
faith is deepened, courage strengthened,  
grace received and strength reformed.***

Based on John Wesley's final words  
Andrew Pratt (b.1948) Singing the Faith, hymn 610, verse 3

# *A gift of Christmas*

A gift for you from the Methodist Church. If you would like to go to church this Christmas, or at any other time, visit **[www.methodist.org.uk/findachurch](http://www.methodist.org.uk/findachurch)** to find a church close to you. You can also use search engines like Google, Bing and Yahoo to find your nearest Methodist church.

For more information about the Methodist Church and its work in the UK and overseas, visit **[www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)**. You can also find us on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr** and **Google+**.

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