

in the power of the Gospel and the Spirit before it takes on a human reality. The Spirit who gives birth to John and Jesus makes Christmas happen, inspires family get-togethers and church celebrations. It is the same Spirit who gives birth to the Church.

Creation and new creation, birth and new-birth, life and renewed life, beginnings and new beginnings are all the work of the Holy Spirit so that even a brand-new Christmas celebration this year hinges on the power of God and not on the willpower of people. May Christ, as the Word made flesh, be born a new in our life, again and again!

Church, as you patiently wait, describe the sort of birth or new birth you are expecting...

1. the birth of a baby in the family.....
2. new birth in the Spirit.....
3. births of new opportunities.....
4. birth or renewed life of the church...
5. birth of prosperity as God "fills the hungry with good things".....
6. new births to our ministries.....

What other births are you expecting this Christmas?

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When we have journeyed through Advent, we will have taken on board God's coming in Jesus. We will have read and heard the Word that will not pass away, we will have sung the carols in very unique ways this year, then our faith will be born anew, our hope in God reawakened...we will emerge with our eyes set on the Second Advent.

Hymn: 169 'Come though long expected Jesus'

Let us pray

Loving God, we bring our prayers for others and for ourselves, remembering those places where the church is persecuted for their faith in you. **Come, Lord Jesus. Come, as our Saviour and God.**

We pray for those who seek to bring peace and goodwill to all, for those who are involved in war or live in the threats of war and for those caught up in earthquakes, flood, famine, tornadoes and other disasters. **Come, Lord Jesus. Come, as our Saviour and God.**

Lord let your presence be known in our homes and our actions. We pray that you will show yourself to us through our loved ones and friends. **Come, Lord Jesus. Come, as our Saviour and God.**

We remember all whose lives are limited by pain and distress; all who are struggling with doubt or despair; all whose faith is shaken by what is happening around them and those who are ill, lonely, and bereaved. **Come, Lord Jesus. Come, as our Saviour and God.**

God our Father, your grace has been given to us in the gift of eternal life and in your abiding presence. We give you thanks for all who have departed from us. Comfort their loved ones.

6. Other prayer concerns.....

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Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen. The Lord's Prayer - Our Father ...**

Blessing - May Jesus our Immanuel sanctify us all, this Christmas, as we expect new births. **Amen.**

Hymn: 191 'Away in a manger'
By Rev Marcus Torchon

Coventry & Nuneaton Methodist Church

Worship is our Way of Life!

Elizabeth & Mary's

New Birth Preparation



<http://clipart-library.com/clipart/1487092.htm>

**On this
19th December 2021**

Readings:
Psalm 80:1-7, Micah 5: 2-5 Hebrews
10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

**This sheet's content is exclusively for
home worship.**

Order of Service

The Worship of God by the People of God on this 4th Sunday of Advent

Church, let us rejoice, for Christ comes to be a light in our darkness. He comes to us: who are longing for a new day, whose lives are dominated by fear, who have hard decisions to make, who have been in limbo in some sort of desert. Certainly, He comes to everyone!

May Advent continue to be for us a time of peace and hope and joy that our faith in the new life that Jesus gives may increase.

Hymn 188 "There is a light"

Prayers: *In the long dark days of winter, the cold and dismal days of waiting for the spring, you surprise us with new life, by the joy of your good news, loving God. You come to us as the King of the world, our Deliverer. Forgive us when we are not prepared for you.*

*Open our eyes, **Creator God**, to see your presence within our lives and the good being done all around us. Open our minds to appreciate the relationships that you inspire and are supportive in church, family, and society.*

*Open our ears, **Word of Life**, to hear your message of salvation, the offer of a new and full life in you, the call to follow you as your disciples, at this time.*

*Open our hearts, **Spirit of God**, to receive - your power into our life, your gift of hope and joy and peace, your love that binds us together and courage to witness for you.*

*Enthuse our desire, **Saviour God**, to be ready for you, alert and prepared to see you and hear you and serve you, this Christmas and every day of our lives. **Amen.***

Hymn 175 "Light of the world"

Reflection

Elizabeth and Mary are two loving and open-hearted relatives whose lives are decorated and forever changed by the birth stories of two unique boys, John the Baptist and Jesus. Let us briefly engage with such stories at three levels.

1. They get together to share -As God's vessels through whom God brings forth two unique boys, Elizabeth and Mary inhabit the same reality and role, the same joy and expectancy, the same privilege and responsibility as mothers to be. Since they share so much in common, mutual support becomes beneficial. Out of this, Mary's visit and her greetings strengthen Elizabeth while in response her unborn baby leaps for joy. As a host, Elizabeth acknowledges Mary and exclaims "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?"

This encounter reminds us of Paul's words of reassurance to the church in Rome "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (Romans 1:11-12).

I want us to highlight and cherish the importance of family get-togethers as a distinct feature of our Christmas parties and celebrations. May Mary and Elizabeth's patience and mutual support be a good practice in our celebrations as friends, church, and families.

Church, outline some socio-economic issues that pregnant women face today, then offer them to the Lord!

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How can we offer safe spaces, a presence of care and trust, to women and girls who struggle alone with the weight of pregnancy?

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2. A privilege, but not an entitlement - Another key point in Elizabeth and Mary's preparations is their keen spirit of humility. Because of the Angels' predictions, they know that their boys will be extraordinary: John the Baptist will be the one to prepare the Way of the Lord and Jesus, our Saviour, will "feed his flock in the strength of the God" (Micah 5:4). Even so, they seize these moments of service, as a privilege but not as an earned right, to glorify God.

In accepting the role to be mother Elizabeth says "What the Lord has done for me will keep people from looking down on me" (Luke 1:25). Likewise, Mary exclaims "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour" who "lifted up the lowly" (Luke 1.46-47,52). The attitude of these women exemplifies this exhortation of Jesus "Whoever is the greatest should be the servant of the others. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored" (Matthew 23:11-12). They trust God even when they do not know where their pregnancies will take them.

Church, how do we receive the call to God's service in our lives with humility?

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3. Holy Spirit, the agency of birth - The Holy Spirit comes upon Elizabeth to accomplish her role (Luke 1.41). Equally, the Holy Spirt comes upon Mary to bear a Son (Luke 1.35). Every new beginning is birthed