



# Christmas Day

Worship@Home December 25, 2020



## Gathering and Lighting the Advent candles

We light the light of Christ.

Into a world often harsh and violent, the Christ child was born in vulnerability and innocence. Even while death was threatened by the powers that be, and while the shadows of fear covered the earth, hope itself was born that night; peace was embodied; joy was proclaimed; and love came to live with us, Emmanuel. Into this same world, we bring the light of Christ.

## Call to worship

The people who walked in darkness  
**have seen a great light.**

For a Child has been born to us  
**a son given to us.**

Authority rests upon his shoulders,  
and he is named

**Wonderful Counselor**

**Mighty God**

**Everlasting father**

**Prince of Peace.**

Come Child of God

**and melt our hearts of stone.**

Come stand in the Light

**Emmanuel: God is with us.**

## Acknowledging

We acknowledge the First Peoples of this place: their elders past and present: and those emerging: we seek healing and a loving relationship together.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress

## Singing: O come, all ye faithful

**TiS 304 vv. 1,2,3,6 & 7**

O come, all ye faithful,  
joyful and triumphant,  
come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
come and behold him  
born the king of angels:  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*Christ the Lord!*

True God of true God,  
Light of light eternal,  
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;  
Son of the Father,  
begotten, not created:  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*Christ the Lord!*

See how the shepherds  
summoned to his cradle,  
leaving their flocks,  
draw nigh with holy fear;  
we too will thither  
bend our joyful footsteps:  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*O come, let us adore him,*  
*Christ the Lord!*

*Hymn continues P2*





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*Hymn continues*

Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation  
sing all ye citizens of heaven above  
Glory to God,  
glory in the highest:  
*O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!*

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
born this happy morning  
Jesus, to thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father  
now in flesh appearing:  
*O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!*

*<sup>1</sup>John Francis Wade*

## Prayer

God who chose to come to us,  
we are finally still enough  
to come to you.  
All the preparations and presents,  
all the cooking and cleaning  
all the cards and conversations  
we leave them all, for this time ...

and we come to you with grateful hearts,  
inviting you to fill us  
with your love and hope,  
your joy and peace  
inviting the child of love to be born  
in the manger of our hearts.  
(stillness)

God of light,  
you came as a baby into our world;  
forgive us for ignoring the children  
who are hungry and lost around us.  
You became weak for our sake;  
forgive us when we think  
power is the only way to live.  
You became poor to serve the world;  
forgive us for our obsession with  
wealth and material goods.

You became one of us  
so we might draw closer to you,  
God of Christmas mornings,  
so have mercy on us.  
Comfort us, as you touch us  
with your steadfast love;  
strengthen us as you pour out  
your faithfulness on us;  
help us to sing the good news  
of the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
your Child, into our world.  
(stillness)

In the silence of that first morning,  
grace took a breath,  
a tiny hand clutched love,  
the Light of life came into the world  
that we might be forgiven.  
We join all around us  
in singing the glad songs  
of Christmas joy this morning  
and all the days to come.  
Amen.



*Worship@Home: Christmas Day. Uniting Church in Australia, VicTas, Presbytery of Gippsland*



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



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## Listening

**Read** Isaiah 52:7-10

## Reflecting

**Wendy**

I am not really sure what it means for God to have a bared holy arm (v 10). But what an opening line “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news.....” (v 7). I want to be that person who gets to announce Peace! We are to announce that God is love and that God’s realm and its topsy-turvy values are worth trumpeting about. What an image though! Sentinels singing for joy, Jesus breaking into the world, and comfort and redemption for all. Even the ruins are singing. The love of God is bursting out and won’t be contained.

We are privileged to be given such a charge but there is a responsibility for us too. If we are to declare the Realm of God, born into our world in a continuous and ongoing sense, we are also to live it. We live it in our interactions with our neighbours, with those who are different from us and even those in our own families. We live these very different values that Jesus lived out in dining with the marginalised and unpopular. These values mean praying for those we disagree with, rather than our tendency to denigrate (even the politicians and leaders!). And it means sharing with those we don’t easily consider ‘deserving’. They really are topsy-turvy values and it’s often us who are turned upside down by them. But there is comfort in the redemption we are offered also. There is joy for us in being and bringing the message of Peace this Christmas time.

**Read** Luke 2: 1-7

## Reflecting

**Jennie**

These seven verses are a key and deeply cherished part of our sacred story and they are bursting with contrast and connection:

- A decree from political authority juxtaposed with the birth of one who will challenge earthly power with a greater authority;
- The journey together to a place of homecoming that was a long way from home;
- Ancient prophecy fulfilled through an obscure young woman and a vulnerable newborn baby;
- The wrapping of bands of cloth, a connection to empty burial cloths;
- She gave birth to her firstborn son, in Greek, prototokos, dedicated to God, as Israel is God’s ‘firstborn son’ (Ex 4:22);
- The first resting place of this baby in a feeding trough, when at the end of his life he will be ‘the broken body’ that feeds us;
- There was no room for them in the central, private part of the inn; here is the God of the margins, the one who comes for those who find themselves on the edge.

This is a story of God coming to us in a long anticipated but totally radical and surprising way. Don’t forget that! Don’t get over-dazzled at the manger by the cuteness of the baby or the lowing of the cattle. God rends the heavens and comes to us as one of us, through the agency of Mary and in the particularity of a time and a place. These simple, seven verses hold so much. *While they were there, the time came ...* The time has come, the Christ is born, Emmanuel, God is with us. Alleluia.







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**Read** Luke 2: 8-20

## Reflecting

Ian

Meanwhile, out in the fields, everything was normal: shepherd: sheep! Yet simultaneous realities are about to be awakened: the Messiah is born and is placed in a manger, because there was no room in the inn: and shepherds watch their flocks by night!

In the suburb where I grew up, nothing happened. We were never on the news, our congregation was never in the church newspaper, our school was never chosen for some noted event.

But here in a field, ordinary shepherds encounter a terrifying scene. Light, glory, and a message.

That unbelievable encounter, rather than paralyzing these shepherds, sent them on a curious mission: and upon finding Mary, Joseph and the Christ child. Wonder! But I imagine it might have been the kind of wonder that draws you in, and softly asks you to pay attention and step up to the reality of life; this child is in your world: what must you do, how must you live, to bring wholeness to human life?

The place of wonder for a new family: the place of wonder on an ordinary night. Maybe there never was a night like that again in these shepherds lives? The ordinary continued: but all who encounter the Christ Child are forever changed.

## Singing: The North Wind

TiS 322

The north wind is tossing the leaves  
the red dust is over the town  
the sparrows are under the eaves  
and the grass in the paddock is brown  
as we lift up our voices and sing  
to the Christ child, the heavenly King.

The tree ferns in green gullies sway  
the cool stream flows silently by  
the joybells are greeting the day  
and the chimes are adrift in the sky  
as we lift up our voices and sing to the  
Christ Child, the heavenly King.

*<sup>2</sup>Wheeler/William Garnet James*

## Responding: Prayers for World and Community

'How lovely are our feet', you say. Because you have asked us to bring the message of Good News. Well, actually to BE the good news itself. And heaven knows we all need some of that. It has been a sad year God, hard to see the good really. Bushfires, pandemics, lockdowns and isolations. Loss and grief and fear have been common and this has been the focus of our corporate imagination.

We pray for all who have felt this loss so deeply. Some of us have known loss personally, some in a more corporate sense. There has been a sense of fear, and even of shock perhaps. We hold in this prayer space, those who have touched our hearts.

*Prayer continues P5*





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*Prayer continues*

And faintly we hear the echo in the birth story, the word 'Behold'. Behold you bring good news of great joy! This is our great good news, Jesus you enter our world anew. You enter in unexpected ways and through the most unexpected of people, us. May our hearts be open to others, open to be the cradle which welcomes your incarnational presence and shares your love with the world. May our feet and our hearts be beautiful vessels of Good News.

All of the earth will know your redeeming love, and we rejoice in your unfailing goodness.

## The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## Passing the peace

May the Peace of God  
be born within you:  
**and also within you.**

## Offering-Christmas Bowl

In 1949 refugees were starving in war-ravaged Europe. Rev Frank Byatt, a Methodist Minister from Victoria, called on his congregation to "get a bowl to put on your Christmas dinner table as a Bowl of Remembrance and see if you can get everybody round the table to make a generous gift so that you can share your good dinner with hungry children in other lands."

This year the Christmas Bowl encourages us to Act for Peace in Zimbabwe. Devastated by drought, disaster and inflation the pandemic has impacted families with food shortages, closure of schools and caused unemployment. Worryingly, most families don't even have the clean water they need to stop the spread of the virus.

Your donation will enable Act for Peace's local partner to continue distributing food rations, soap, clean water and vital health information. Through your gift this Christmas Bowl, you will bring them lifesaving relief.

<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au>



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## Singing: Joy to the World

TiS 268

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
let earth receive its king;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;  
let us our songs employ;  
while fields and streams,  
rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world  
with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

<sup>3</sup>Isaac Watts

## Blessing

We have heard the story as it begins.  
It is yet to end.

It continues to be re-born in us,  
the spark of the divine in us  
as we play our part in God's mission  
in the world.

We leave from here, to live that story,  
to tell the story again  
of love born at Christmas  
and to be bearers of peace, love,  
hope and joy.

May Emmanuel, God-with-us,  
be with you and remain with you always.  
Amen.

*Today's service has been prepared by:*  
*Rev. Jennie Gordon (Reflection),*  
*Rev. Dcn. Wendy Elson (Reflection),*  
*Rev. Ian Turnnidge (Reflection).*

The Shearwater Congregations:  
Cowes, Wonthaggi, Inverloch, Tarwin Lower,  
Fish Creek, Foster & Toora.

<sup>1</sup>O come, all ye faithful TIS 304 Used with Permission Possibly by John Francis Wade c.1711-1786 Adeste Fideles

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<sup>3</sup>Used with permission CCLI 241 739 TIS 268 Isaac Watts, 1674-1748 alt., based on Psalm 98 ANTIOCH

