

Order of Service 24/12/2020 Christmas Eve

'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'. Luke 2:14

SONG: Silent Night, TiS 311

1. Silent night, holy night: all is calm, all is bright
2. Silent night, holy night: shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing, 'Alleluia;
Christ the Saviour is born, Christ the Saviour is born.'
3. Silent night, holy night: wondrous star, lend your light;
with the angels let us sing Alleluia to our King;
Christ our Saviour is born, Christ our Saviour is born.

SONG: Silent night, by Joseph Mohr, from Together in Song, Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP

Saide

Come on this holy night to worship God
the source of all hope, peace, joy and love.
Come let us enter into God's future together
gathered around the Advent garden
as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Saviour.

Good evening I'm Saide and I'm delighted to be welcoming you to this service of carols and candlelight gathered together in our homes as we move towards the closing of a year unlike anything we have experienced before. Tonight, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus our reflections are shaped by the hope, peace, joy and love that shapes God's future.

We gather on the land of a dreaming people,
the Wurundjeri of the Kulin Nation.
Let's take a deep breath together inviting the Holy Spirit to breathe in us as we prepare to listen and sing.

GOSPEL READING: Luke 2:1-14

Julie & Peter

with SONG: O little town of Bethlehem, TiS 316

Peter - In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see you lie!
Above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by:
yet, in your dark streets shining the everlasting light,
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.

Julie - Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

2. For Christ is born of Mary; and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing and voices ring with peace to all on earth.

Peter - In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But 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. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'

3. How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the glorious love of heaven.
No ear may hear his coming; but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him still
the dear Christ enters in.

Julie - And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

4. 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 their great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

For these Words of Witness and for Christ the Word
Thanks be to God

SONG: [O little town of Bethlehem](#), by Phillips Brooks,
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

REFLECTION and CANDLE LIGHTING

Saide, Ian

Ian – The prophet Isaiah proclaims

*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.*

Saide – What an extraordinary year this has been, a year of stark contrasts, of shattered dreams and emerging hope, of dangerous division and calls for peace, of crushing grief and fragile joy, of destructive anger and eternal love. Soon we will light our Christ Candles but for now let's take a moment to claim our part in living God's future now.

Hope

Ian – The psalmist cries out

Restore us, O God of hosts;

Let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Psalm 80:7

Saide – Our year began with the continuation of a bushfire season of extraordinary ferocity destroying homes, lives, dreams, livelihoods, animals and the natural environment. We blessed Ian on his way as prepared to offer ministry in East Gippsland and he sent us back powerful images of hope - green shoots emerging from burnt earth, burnt trees. Hope is fragile, easily crushed by powerful forces, both natural and from the darkness of humanity. Where do we place our hope? How is hope nurtured? What we do now, today and every day nurtures this hope, the decisions and choices we make bring hope. What are your hopes for this coming year, for the environment, for people on the margins, for yourself and your family?

Ian – With our hearts full of hope we turn to you
Maker of heaven and earth
Singing a new song, telling of your glory.
We live in your future now
Seeking to be a people of hope.
Forgive us when we find this difficult
Help us to always turn our faces to you.

Saide – we light this candle for hope

SONG: O Holy Night

O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining.
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

*Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night divine, O night, O night Divine.*

Peace

Ian – The psalmist declares
*Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.* Psalm 85:10

Saide – As the bushfires eased we began to find our way into the year amidst stories of a virus and before too long the pandemic. The world around us erupted into a maelstrom and engulfed our every waking moment with news, stories, plans and the gradual shutting down of life as we once knew it. The divisions that we always knew about became even more stark and the path of discipleship became clearer. We turned our faces to Jesus, to his message of peace, his call to care for the vulnerable. And so we acted and responded, reshaping our ministries, reaching out in new and life changing ways, adding our voices to the call for the end of division between those who have much and those who have never had enough.

Ian – With our feet set on the path of peace we walk with you
Light of the world, Prince of Peace
Working for justice, telling of your glory.
We live in your future now
Seeking to be a people of peace.
Forgive us when our voices grow silent
Help us always to speak of peace in your name.

Saide – we light this candle for peace

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
O'er the world a star is sweetly gleaming,
Here came the wisemen from the Orient land.
The King of kings lay thus lowly manger;
In all our trials born to be our friend.

*Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born;
O night divine, O night, O night Divine.*

Joy

Ian – The psalmist exults

*Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy*

Psalm 126:2a

Saide – The days, weeks and months went on. Winter came and with the season - lockdown, face masks, stay at home orders, one hour of exercise, a five kilometre radius, daily press conferences, our city all but silenced. Friends and family members lost their jobs, students studied in isolation, bereft of their circle of friends, people of all ages yearned for connection, mental health became an increasing concern for many. So many lives have been lost and changed beyond recognition through those dark winter months. In the face of this crushing grief we have held on to the joy we have in community. We have gathered in new ways, worshipping God in our homes, by rivers, in our gardens, our streets on daily walks, finding joy in moments of connection with each other and with God the source of all joy.

Ian – With tendrils of joy flowing through our veins we dance with you

God of abundance and delight

Celebrating all that life has to offer.

We live in your future now

Seeking to be a people of joy.

Forgive us when our footsteps grow heavy

Help us to be alive to the glory of all creation.

Saide – we light this candle for joy

*Truly He taught us to love one another,
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother.
And in His name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
With all our hearts we praise His holy name.*

*Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born;
O night divine, O night, O night Divine.*

SONG: [O Holy Night](#), by Placide Cappeau de Roquemaure, 1847; PUBLIC DOMAIN

Love

Ian – The psalmist sings

I will sing of your steadfast love ...

Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens

Psalm 89:1a,2b

And throughout the year we have heard voices raised in anger and protest, throwing a harsh light on the darkness that threatens to shadow all that is good and beautiful. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, a vulnerable baby born to a vulnerable yet strong young woman, we are reminded that God's future is a future of love. A future where all people, all creatures, all creation is held and nurtured in and through the eternal love of God. This Christmas Eve let's remind ourselves of the powerful force of love that has sustained us through this year, love that has opened us up to each other, giving birth to a new and much bigger community of God's people than we were before, giving birth to hope, to peace, to joy.

Ian – With Mary’s song in our hearts we place our trust in you
God of all mercy, grace and love
Opening our whole lives to you.
We live in your future now
Seeking to be a people of love.
Forgive us when we are fearful
Help us to be a shining beacon of love for all the world.

Saide – we light this candle for love

SONG: Infant Holy, TiS 292

1. Infant holy, infant lowly,
for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing little knowing
Christ the babe is Lord of all;
swift are winging angels singing,
nowells ringing, tidings bringing,
Christ the babe is Lord of all,
Christ the babe is Lord of all.

2. Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story,
tidings of a gospel true;
thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing, greet the morrow,
Christ the babe was born for you,
Christ the babe was born for you.

SONG: Infant Holy, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502. ALSO Reproduced with permission by CCLI license no. 247623

Saide – Can you feel this future, God’s future? Can you feel it as we worship together in our homes this evening? Can you feel it as you go about your daily lives? Can you claim this future and live in it now? I say yes because we are God’s people, a people of hope, peace, joy and love. Amen.

GOSPEL READING: John 1:1-5,14, p 862

Peter

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

...

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Ian

Ian: Jesus said, I have come as light into the world (Jn 12:46)

And John tells us: What has come into being in him is life, and the life is the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1: 4-5

Take this light – let it shine in your life and into the world – the light of God’s future now

SONG: O come all ye faithful, TiS 304, vs1,2,6

O come all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,
O 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!

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!

SONG: O Come all ye faithful, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Christmas Bowl)

Ray

Let's pray together remembering the work of the Christmas Bowl, making a difference in the lives of vulnerable people.

Eternal God you call us to care for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger
We give thanks for the work of Act for Peace partners through the Christmas Bowl
Help us to stand alongside all those in need.

We pray for the people of Afghanistan especially girls eager to learn
We give thanks for Community World Service Asia advocating for girls' education
Renew our hope in a future where all children are valued and cherished.

We pray for the Rohingya people living in the Jamtoli refugee camp in Bangladesh
We give thanks for all who offer care amidst the COVID outbreak in the camp
May we also support the work of building safe and peaceful futures.

We pray for Sri Lankan refugees returning home to rebuild their lives.
We give thanks for the support offered and opportunities made possible.
May our offerings contribute to the building of safe joy filled lives.

We pray for peace in Syria and for Syrian people living in refugee camps in Jordan.
We give thanks for richness found in the simple act of sewing face masks.
May the love that we know in Christ empower us to transform lives through our giving.

We pray for the people of Zimbabwe suffering under the impact of the coronavirus
We give thanks for the Christmas Bowl supporting people to rebuild their lives.
In this time of great uncertainty may the light of your love shine on all in need. Amen.

SONG: [Hark the herald angels sing](#), TiS 303

1. Hark! the herald angels sing glory to the newborn King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all you nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim, 'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'
Hark! the herald angels sing glory to the new-born king.

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb!
veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased in human flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel. *(Refrain)*

3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. *(Refrain)*

SONG: [Hark the herald angels sing](#), by Charles Wesley, from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

BLESSING

Ian

Go into this holy night
with the blessing of our God,
the Source of all life,
the Son of all love,
and the Spirit of all peace.
Hold the Christ child in your heart
and shine his light for all the world to see.
Go in peace, in the name of Christ, Amen.

THANK YOU

Liturgist:
Saide Cameron

Bible readings:
Julie McKinnon
Peter McKinnon

Reflection:
Saide Cameron
Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:
Ray Cameron

Christmas Carol Coordinators:
Alistair Hunter
Elaine Potter
Natalie Sims
Shawn Whelan

Musicians:
James Balsillie
Ryan Kambouris
Catherine Leslie
Bronte Potter
Elaine Potter
Courtney Rohde
Natalie Sims
Shawn Whelan
Organ from
smallchurchmusic.com

Vocalists:
Simone Alesich
James Balsillie
Helen Burnham
Saide Cameron
Brad Coath
Collen Coath
Glenice Cook
Stephanie Dykes
Ian Ferguson

Alistair Hunter
Jessica Kvensakul
Catherine Leslie
Elaine Potter
Julia Potter
Annie Quail
Courtney Rohde
Kate Scull
Natalie Sims
Geoff Thompson
Daniel Whelan
Shawn Whelan

Choir:
[Dream a Dream](#), from the
collection '[There is Room for Us
All](#)', Words by Shirley Erena
Murray, Music by Lori True, GIA
Publications, Inc.
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60638
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Christmas Carols:
Silent night (311), by Joseph
Mohr; O little town of Bethlehem
(316), by Phillips Brooks, O
Come all ye faithful (304), Hark
the herald angels sing (303), by
Charles Wesley, from Together
in Song, Harper Collins
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Ian Ferguson

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:14