

Opening

Praise God, sun and moon;
praise God, all you shining stars
Psalm 148:3!

Getting ready

Sign in
Spread out.
Masks on (including for singing)
Recorded music (back to live music next week).

Ian

Call to Worship

Breathe to centre...

Ian

from Psalm 148 (Xmas Bowl resources)

Let all of Creation praise God.

Let the mountains and hills, fruit trees, and all cedars praise God.

Let the wild animals and cattle, creeping things and flying birds praise God.

Let all rulers and those in authority praise God.

Let the sun and moon, shining stars, and sparkling seas and all of creation praise God!

Let all people young and old, men and women and children say 'Praise God!'

The whole universe echoes with songs of praise.

Praise God!

Gathering Song

TIS303 Hark the Herald Angels sing

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

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect
the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,
the traditional custodians of this land
since time immemorial.

We are learning that the land
is not ours to own, but to look after;
and that if we listen,
we may hear in it the calling of the eternal Spirit.

**Responding to this call, we commit ourselves
to work for justice, reconciliation,
and care of the earth.**

Welcome and Introduction

Christmas Continues
Dave brings the word.

Ian

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

With words from Isaiah 9:2-7

Ian

Breathe in the light and warmth of this day –
all creation celebrates with us today.

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

Jesus, Light of the World,
you shine with summer's glory.
Be born as radiance in our hearts today.

Breathe in the joy of this day –
the joy of life renewed.

*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us...*

Jesus, hope of love's fulfillment,
your baby cry sounds the depths of wisdom.
Be born with bliss in our hearts today.

Breathe in the peace of this day –
God's universal shalom.

*His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace...*

Jesus, Prince of Peace,
you hold the helpless in earth's manger.
Be born with reconciling grace in our hearts today.

Breathe into confession...

We struggle to follow your way:
lead us God of love.
We strain to hear your voice:
call us God of grace.
We flail in the dark to touch your hand:
hold us God of mercy.
We fall from you:
embrace us with your forgiving love,
Just as you embraced the world in the birth of Jesus.

We pray in the name of the Christ child. Amen

Word of Grace

God is wise and God is merciful,
God knows our hearts and God hears our cry.
God comes to search for us in the birth of Christ.
And God leads us home.

Hear Christ's word of grace:
Our sin is forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Candle Lighting with the Children

Ian and Dave

Things Mary felt:

- *Troubled/Confused/Afraid (Gabriel's news)*
- *Faithful (Yes I will)*
- *Full of Praise/"Magnificent" (My Soul Magnifies the Lord)*
- *Birth pain*
- *Love for child*
- *Amazement (at the shepherd's news)*
- *Treasuring and Pondering (Gabriel, Shepherds, Simeon and Anna, Jesus in the Temple)*

A prayer for us and the world:

- *Disturbed by an angel*
- *Faithfully respond to God's call*
- *Join in the praise of creation for its creator*
- *Not suffer too badly from the pain of new life*
- *Filled with love*
- *Amazed by life's wonders*
- *Treasure and ponder the way of the Spirit among us*

Song – He came down

1. *He came down that we may have hope (x3)
Hallelujah for evermore.*

2. *He came down that we may have peace...*

3. *He came down that we may have joy...*

4. He came down that we may have love...

SONG: [He came down](#); Cameroon Traditional, transcribed & arranged by John L Bell
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(adapted for Christmas Day 2013, BUC) Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Gospel Reading

Meg Orton

Luke 2:21-40

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Sermon

Dave

Loving God,

Take these ancient words, and through your Holy Spirit, may they become for us your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Debate has raged... well, no, not exactly... about what to call this first Sunday after Christmas... Dead as a doornail Sunday, sleep-in Sunday, hit the beach Sunday. I'd like to propose we call it 'extension table Sunday', in honour of all the extension tables that are still in place in homes all around the world. More on that proposal, soon.

Let's have a look at what Luke has just offered us a couple of days ago:

"So the shepherds went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger... When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and

all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart..." Luke chapter 2, verse 16 to 19

Good on you for turning up this morning to hear what happens next...! It's only a couple of verses later that Luke provides us with some tantalising insights in to Jesus' early life. And thank goodness he does – what we've just heard read by XXX appears only in Luke's gospel. And it's easily overlooked – especially at this time of year. Dead as a door nail Sunday – oh, no extension table Sunday.

So, let's dive in.

The first thing Luke wants to make really clear to those who are reading / listening, is that Mary and Joseph are pious – they take their Jewish religious tradition seriously, even though they are both young in the faith. Mary is still healing from the birth, still learning to breastfeed, hormones are all over the place, sleep-deprived, and yet there are two important Jewish religious rituals to focus on – the circumcision of her child after 7 days have elapsed, and her own ritual purification 40 days after giving birth. A couple of familiar numbers there. This allows her to then enter the temple again, to be in the presence of God.

Mary has Moses' law from Leviticus 12 on her mind: *"When the days of her purification are completed, the woman who has borne a child shall bring to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting a lamb in it's first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering.*

The priest shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement on her behalf; then she shall be clean from her flow of blood. If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves, or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.

I don't know about you, but my western, 21st century sensibilities rile at this idea that Mary needed to be made clean of her sins after giving birth to the Christ child.

They took two turtledoves, because they couldn't afford a sheep. I wonder what their shepherd ancestors thought of this... Abraham, Jacob, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Joseph, Moses, David... that a sheep couldn't be offered to God at this time, in this moment, with the birth of the longed-for Messiah?

Another Simeon enters the story – almost 2000 years after the first Simeon. Simeon, who was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel. Simeon, whose name means "God is listening". Simeon, who took one look at the child, held Jesus in his arms, and exclaimed to God: My work here is done! My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. Here he is – a light for revelation to the gentiles. I've been looking forward to the consolation of Israel – well here it is! I can die in peace – in shalom, completeness. Knowing that you have delivered, O God – delivered on your promise."

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about their child...

Ok... ok... this is where I yearn for a little more detail, Luke... Why were they amazed...? Was it still sinking in, that this child was seriously special? Had the witness from John, Elizabeth, the angels, the shepherds, not been enough...? Perhaps. Certainly, Mary's head would have been spinning, and Joseph would have been trying very hard to keep up.

They were amazed at what was being said... I think I'd be feeling more protective than amazed, to be honest. *"Who are you, to heap these expectations on our new born!"* Maybe that's just my own schtic, as someone who had too many expectations heaped upon them.

They were amazed. I wonder whether they were amazed at the order in which Simeon said things. This devout Jewish man who had been waiting expectantly for the consolation of Israel. And yet he says first, that this child will be a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and second for glory to your people Israel." The gentiles, the outsiders, first. The insiders second. An extension table is needed for God's expansive love.

Perhaps the scandal of that order explains Simeon's second oracle – surely one of the hardest things for a 14 year old mother to hear:

“Your child is destined for the falling of many in Israel, and the rising of many. He will be a sign that will be opposed. The inner thoughts of many will be revealed. And Mary, a sword will pierce your own soul, too...”

I'm not sure Mary will be treasuring these words and pondering them in her heart... Surely the hardest, harshest words for a young devout Jewish mother to hear – your child will be a trouble-maker – he will bring about the downfall of many, and the uprising of many, and will be like a knife to your heart.”

And then Simeon falls silent, leaves, exits stage left.

Luke introduces Anna – whose name means gracious or favoured – a favoured woman about to speak to Mary, most highly favoured one. Daughter of Phanu'el which means the face of God – the same name Jacob gives to the place where he wrestled with God through the night, came face to face with God, and walked away limping for the rest of his life. I wonder whether Mary limps, at least metaphorically, for the rest of her life, after what Simeon has just said.

The prophetess Anna... gracious, favoured, daughter of the face of God... a widow of many decades, devout, in the temple all day and night – just like Hannah. What is Anna going to say to Mary?

Well, as it turns out, nothing... At least, nothing is recorded directly by Luke. Luke leaves us to fill in the gaps... I wonder what they say to each other?

Luke does record that as soon as Anna sees the child, she begins to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Anna is one of the first evangelists. Then she, too, exits stage left.

So, what are we to make of all of this? Where is the good news?

Well, firstly, it's fair to say that this episode – particularly Simeon's oracle – is another in Ian's collection of Biblical accounts that debunk “traditional family values”.

There are at least two major themes Luke is exploring here: first is some sense of awe at seeing the infant Jesus. There are echoes with seeing the resurrected Jesus here – especially Peter's response – amazed at what he had seen... a sense of awe, and some sort of super-charged, spirit-filled response.

The second thing is that the Christ-event – the birth of Jesus - upsets the normal world order. Disrupts. It's inconvenient. It's a shot to the heart for Mary, it'll bring massive changes to the Jerusalem temple, it upends our understanding of God.

It's extension table Sunday, folks. About ten years ago mum and dad got a phone call on the 21st of December (gravy day) from the Bird family out of Alice Springs. “We might come down for Christmas.” Was all they said. Mum and dad didn't think much of it.

A couple of days later, on Christmas Eve, mum woke up, opened the curtain windows and saw an unusual Toyota troopie parked out the front. She went downstairs to make a cuppa, then heard a quiet knock at the door. Paddy and Eileen Bird were standing there, and behind them were 10 more of the Bird family.

They'd driven all day and night for a couple of days to be with us on Christmas. They'd brought nothing with them. Their presence was the gift. They'd been to mum and dad's place once before, but remembered where it was, like magi's, and when they arrived at 4 in the morning, decided to wait out in the car until they saw a light go on.

We needed a couple more extension tables that Christmas, and our big lunch ended up out in the shed where we could fit everyone. Best Christmas ever.

It's extension table Sunday, folks, and God has just pushed the tables out even more. Amen.

Song

TIS292 Infant holy

- 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,
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Prayers of the People

Helen Burnham

God of continuing creation

Here is a baby taken to Temple for the first time. A child of hope, peace, joy and love. God turning the world around. God's promise.

This is what we see when we look at our children and grand children. All the promise, all our hopes dreams and prayers for the future.

Ever present God

Help us to live a life filled with your presence.

May we recognise you, in the people we see as we live and work in your world.

Help us to live and share what we have so that none are homeless, or stateless.

We pray that your Church always works out your purpose.

Ever loving God

we pray for a vaccine that works and can be freely given to all.

For hospital and medical staff who are being overwhelmed by the sick and dying overseas. And we give thanks and pray for our continued success here.

Hope and pray for a world that joins together to fight climate change, for the sake of our children.

Pray that we can live in peace, without greed, exploitation, aggression and oppression.

Pray for food, homes, safety, medical care, loving families for every soul on your good earth.

Ever faithful God

We Pray That we grow with you in faith and love.

That we dance and sing your music through our lives.

That we spread your love wherever we go.

That we forgive as you have forgiven us through your precious gift.

In the name of the baby, child, and adult who lives and walks with us into God's future.

In the name of Jesus. Amen

Offering

Ian

Bring offerings forward and light taper candles

Music: Play "O Holy Night" – fade out if people are finished before the song

Concluding with:

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.

Notices

Ian

Sending Song

TIS316 O little town of Bethlehem

-
- 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.*
 - 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 to God the King and peace to all on earth.*
 - 3. How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his 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.*
 - 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.*
-

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

Blessing and Sending

Go in peace,
sing for joy,
live with hope!

Cradle the life that gives life.

And be blessed
from the Source of Christmas love
through the child in the manger
by the Spirit of the angels' song.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Closing

Music: O Holy Night (no words on screen)

Worship team

Liturgist:

Ian Ferguson

Acknowledgement of Country

Ian Ferguson

Bible readings:

Meg Orton

Children's Time:

Dave Hall

(Children, Youth &
Young Adult Pastor)

Ian Ferguson

(Minister of the Word)

Reflection:

Dave Hall

(Children, Youth &
Young Adult Pastor)

Prayers of the People:

Helen Burnham

Christmas Carol

Coordinators:

Alistair Hunter

Elaine Potter

Natalie Sims

Shawn Whelan

Vocalists:

Simone Alesich

James Balsillie

Hazel Bluer

Helen Burnham

Saide Cameron

Brad Coath

Glenice Cook

Stephanie Dykes

Ian Ferguson

Alistair Hunter

Jessica Kvensakul

Catherine Leslie

Elaine Potter

Julia Potter

Annie Quail

Courtney Rohde

Natalie Sims

Daniel Whelan

Shawn Whelan

Musicians:

Jane Allardice

James Balsillie

Ryan Kambouris

Catherine Leslie

Bronte Potter

Courtney Rohde

Natalie Sims

Organ from

smallchurchmusic.com

Welcomers:

Helen Rowe

Mal Rowe

Miriam Siddel

Production:

Saide Cameron

Ian Ferguson

Audio-visual:

Ray Cameron

Praise God, sun and moon;
praise God, all you shining stars
Psalm 148:3!