

Order of Service 24/12/2021 Christmas Eve

Opening verse on screen:

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. Luke 2:6

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Saide

We gather in quiet darkness now to worship God
at the culmination of Advent in hope, peace, joy and love.
We gather in expectation of the birth of Christ
with Mary, young, pregnant, journeying to Bethlehem.
We look to see Christmas reflected in her face.
And we look at our suffering, pandemic impacted world through her eyes.
Come with Mary to worship God on this holy night.

Good evening I'm Saide and with Ian, Semisi, Jason and Elaine leading the musicians we welcome you into this space here and online to sing, to pray and to light candles, to create a space to hear the story of Jesus' birth anew. During worship we will be looking at a series of paintings by Ann Soo - Between Shadow and Light. This series was part of our Emergence exhibition and offers us an invitation to enter into Mary's experience of Christmas. You have postcards of the images which you will be invited to write on during the service. If you are worshipping online, please have paper and something available to write or draw with.

We gather on the land of a dreaming people,
the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung of the Kulin Nation.
We honour their elders and ancestors as we celebrate Christmas in this place.

Let's take a deep breath together inviting the Holy Spirit to breathe in us as we sing.

Song - O Little Town of Bethlehem, TiS 316

- 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

Introduction

Ian

We enter now into a time of reflection. We will listen to readings from the Gospel of Luke. As we move through the service an invitation will be offered to reflect on one of Ann's series of paintings and write or draw a response on the postcard if you wish. We will light the Advent candles in turn and then sing. Semisi and Jason will light candles and later after the Christ Candle is lit we will all come forward and light our carol candles from the Christ Candle. If you are worshipping online please light a candle in your space if you have one available. So now let's take a deep breath together inviting the Holy Spirit to breathe in us as we listen and respond.

Gospel Reading - Annunciation

Luke 1:26-33 (Between Shadow & Light 5)

Semisi

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Semisi lights the candles accompanying the manger as Saide speaks

Reflection invitation

Saide

God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary offering her greetings. But she was much perplexed. At the end of another challenging year, shaped by lockdowns, separation and uncertainty how have you heard God speaking to you? What has perplexed you, and were have you found hope? Take some time to write or draw your response on the postcard.

Advent Candle - Hope

Ian

We light this candle for hope

In the darkest of times may we hear God's word to us, for us.

Gaze into this flame.

Let hope brighten and follow you all your days dancing like the wings of butterflies.

Song - Infant Holy, TiS 292 vs 1

*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.*

Gospel Reading - Response

Luke 1:38, Between Shadow & Light 3

Jason

Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

Then the angel departed from her.

Jason lights the candles accompanying painting 3 as Ian speaks

Reflection invitation

Ian

Mary responded to the angel 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; ...'. I wonder how she was feeling. Was she agitated, fearful, filled with wonder, amazed, at peace? How are you feeling this evening? Are you at peace, longing for peace in your life, in the world around us? Take some time to write or draw your response on the postcard.

Advent Candle - Peace

Saide

We light this candle for peace.

In these troubled times may we hear God's word to us, for us.

Gaze into this flame.

Let peace blossom with the fragrance of flowers and heal the wounds that you carry.

Song - Infant Holy, TiS 292 vs 2

*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

Gospel Reading - Rejoice

Luke 1:46-48a, 52-53 – Between Shadow & Light 4

Semisi

And Mary said,

'My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

for she has looked with favour on the lowliness of her servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ...

God has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

she has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

Reflection invitation

Saide

Mary rejoices in God her Saviour, proclaiming that all generations will call her blessed.

Look deep within your soul. How does your living magnify God? What causes your spirit to rejoice in God? What and who has brought you joy through the experience of isolation, lockdown and loss? What troubles you personally and in the world we live in?

Do you, like Mary, know yourself to be blessed? What are the changes you want to live in the year ahead? What will bring you joy? Take some time to write or draw your response on the postcard.

Semisi lights the candles accompanying painting 4 as Saide speaks

Advent Candle - Joy

Ian

We light this candle for joy.

As we look towards a new year may we hear God's word to us, for us.

Gaze into this flame.

Let joy shape your living as you open yourself to the wonder of new beginnings.

Song - Silent Night, TiS 311

1. *Silent night, holy night: all is calm, all is bright
round the virgin mother and child, holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.*

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

Gospel Reading - Birth

Luke 2:1-7, Between Shadow & Light 2

Jason

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. He 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.

Jason lights the candles accompanying painting 2 as Ian speaks

Reflection invitation

Ian

Mary delivered her child wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. I wonder how difficult all this was for Mary. Travelling heavily pregnant, no place but a manger for her precious baby. I wonder what she was thinking about - all the difficulties and challenges? Or was all her focus on her baby, on Jesus? Was her heart troubled? Was she overwhelmed with love? How is your heart tonight? What has love cost you this year? What gifts of love have you given and received? What can you celebrate? Take some time to write or draw your response on the postcard.

Advent Candle - Love

Saide

We light this candle for love.

As we remember all those whom we love may we hear God's word to us, for us.

Gaze into this flame.

Let love flow through you, hold you close and set you free to reshape the world with love.

Song - Flame of love

*Flame of love come
Holy Spirit
Make in us your
Cradle home
For the Christ child
Who will meet and
Walk with us til
We are grown*

*Flame of love
Holy Spirit
Make in us
Your cradle home*

2. *Light of laughter
Balm in sorrow
You have been our
Cradle home
Called our names in
to the Silence
Flame of love by
You we're known*

*Flame of love
Holy Spirit
Make in us
Your cradle home*

SONG: [Flame of Love](#), Words: Julie Perrin,
Music: Helen Burnham & Julie Perrin, Arranged: Julia Potter & Elaine Potter

Gospel Reading - Do not be afraid

Luke 2:8-19, Between Shadow & Light 1

Semisi

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.' 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!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they 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.

Semisi lights the candles accompanying painting 1 as Saide speaks

Reflection invitation

Saide

The angel brings a message - good news of great joy for all the people. The shepherds, going about their daily business, are terrified. Mary and Joseph receive an expected visit from the shepherds. Mary treasures their words and ponders them in her heart. So much happening. And yet Mary takes time out to ponder the shepherds' words in her heart.

It's been a big year, two years in fact. So much has happened. The way we live and engage with the world, our community, each other, our family, friends, colleagues has changed so much. We've experienced too much and not enough at the same time, living in a constant state of paradox. God speaks into this space bringing good news of great joy for all the people. God says to us 'Do not be afraid ... 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.'

So then let us go with the shepherd to the manger and see what they saw - a baby born to a young mother, to Mary supported by Joseph. Treasure this moment. Treasure the hope, peace, joy and love you have remembered, discovered this year, this evening. Ponder these things in your heart. Take some time to write or draw your response on the postcard.

Christ Candle

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

Please come forward now with your carol candle, light it from the Christ Candle, collect a tea light, light it and place it alongside the painting you have been most drawn to this evening. When we are all seated the lights will be turned off. We will conclude the service by candlelight.

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 Spirit 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 divine!*

*Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star 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 divine!*

*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,
Let all within us 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 divine!*

Prayers of the People

Kirsty

We pray for the world on this holy night, focusing on those places being supported by our offerings to the Act for Peace Christmas Bowl appeal. We will also pray for those ministries being supported on this site by this congregation.

Jesus light of the world, we pray for the world, for all who are suffer and in need.

We pray for the people of the Indonesia as their livelihoods continue to be uprooted by climate disasters and the pandemic.

We pray for the people of Gaza as they live under ongoing occupation and as they work towards a more peaceful future.

We pray for Sri Lankan refugees in India as they seek to return home, and for all others around the world who find themselves displaced.

We pray today for Syrian refugees as they change their world through skills and education.

We pray for refugees living in Ethiopia and for those working there for healing and hope.

We pray for all who visit the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre seeking support as they navigate the challenges of rebuilding their lives in Australia.

We pray for all seek hospitality through the Olive Way, may they always encounter open arms and hearts.

Bless the work of Act for Peace, the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre and the Olive Way as they shine your light of love in the world. And encourage us all to shine the light of Christmas, the light of hope, peace, joy and love in our lives throughout this year.

Song - Joy to the world, TiS 268

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

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

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

SONG: [Joy to the world](#), by Isaac Watts, 1674-1748,
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Blessing and Sending

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.

The first nowell, TiS 301, v1,2,6

1. *The first nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.*

*Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
born is the king of Israel.*

2. *When they looked up they saw a star
shining in the east, beyond them far,
and to the earth it gave great light
and so it continued both day and night.*

6. *Now let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
who has made heaven and earth from naught,
and with his blood salvation brought.*

SONG: [The first nowell](#), Anonymous, from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Thank you

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

Bible readers:
Jason Minator
Semisi Tapueluelu

Prayers of the People:
Kirsty Bennett

Musicians:
Elaine Potter
(co-ordinator)
Helen Burnham
Andrew Dickinson
Bronte Potter
Maggie Somerville

Images:
Between Shadow & Light
Series - Soo Lai Yin (Ann)
Ian Ferguson

Songs:
(Prelude) [Silent night](#), by
Joseph Mohr, from [Together
in Song](#), Harper Collins
Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN
Musicians: Bronte and Elaine
Potter, Ryan Kambouris
(Violin), Jess Kvensakul,
Glenice Cook, Natalie Simms,
Shawn, Dan Whelan, Ian
Ferguson, Alistair Hunter,
Elaine Potter, Stephanie
Dykes, Simone Alesich

(Postlude) [Joy to the world](#),
by Isaac Watts, 1674-1748,
from [Together in Song](#),
Harper Collins *Religious*,
PUBLIC DOMAIN
Musicians: Shawn Whelan
(co-ordinator), Simone
Alesich, Helen Burnham,
Saide Cameron, Brad Coath,
Glenice Cook, Stephanie
Dykes, Ian Ferguson,
Georgie Fraser, Alistair
Hunter, Jessica Kvensakul,
Catherine Leslie, Annie Quail,
Helen Rowe, Natalie Sims,
Amelia Ware, Daniel Whelan

Editing / Production:
Michael Cameron
Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
Jamie Thom

Closing verse

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. Luke 2:19