

Order of Service – 25/12/2021 Christmas Day

1. Opening verse on screen

Luke 2:11 '...to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'

2. Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Kirsty

Good morning, Merry Christmas!

Please come and find a place as we listen to the bell calling us to worship.

Pause

Come, let us adore the Christ Child, the newborn King.

Please stand as we sing and welcome the Word.

3. Song: O come all ye faithful verses 1, 6&7, TiS 304

1 *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!*

6 *Sing choirs of angels, sing in exaltation,
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!*

7 *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!*

SONG: [O Come all ye faithful](#), from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

4. Acknowledgement of Country

Clare

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.***

5. Song: The North Wind is Tossing the Leaves, TiS 322

Kirsty

For the Kulin people, Christmas falls in the Kangaroo-apple season, with its changeable thundery weather and long days. Let's sing of Christ's birth in this season.

*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 joy bells 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.*

SONG: The North Wind, by John Wheeler, © copyright Chappell Music Limited, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious, Copyright uncertain

6. Welcome and introduction

Kirsty

During Advent we have listened to the voices of Creation, to Elizabeth and Mary, to John the Baptist and Zechariah, and we have sought to find our voices.

Today we will hear the angels and the shepherds. We will be amazed and will ponder these things and treasure them in our hearts with Mary.

Now, let us take a moment and pause, breathe, listen. Let us pray:

7. Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Kirsty

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace
Son given to us;
Child born for us
We listen for your voice:

We hear the unmistakeable cry of a newborn baby,
Tiny,
Fragile,
Vulnerable.

We know this cry will become a cry for justice,
a cry that challenges privilege and the misuse of power,
a cry for people who are marginalised and face discrimination,
a cry that says to 'Come to me, you are welcome, you belong'.

We know this tiny and fragile voice will challenge,
Will speak truth to power,
Will call people to leave everything and follow,
And speak up with courage in the face of opposition.

Child, we know that your vulnerability will not hold you back,
That you will speak out in the temples and the streets,
That your light will shine in the darkness,
And the darkness will not overcome it.

We stand at your cradle and we adore you.

Savior, Messiah, Lord,

Forgive us:

When we do not cry out for justice,
When we do not challenge,
When we give in to the darkness,
And cannot see your light.

Forgive us:

When we do not hear that newborn cry,
And know that in it the world is changed,
Hope is born,
And love will reign.
Amen.

8. Word of Grace

Kirsty

Christ is born!

This tiny child,

Who comes to us,

Full of truth and grace,

A light to the world.

And so we can say with confidence:

Our sin is forgiven

Thanks be to God.

9. Song: Away in a manger

(with new words by Jennie Gordon)

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.*

*An innocent stranger, this boy-child so near
brings blessing to those who are living in fear
brings hope to the weary and love's burning light
to all who are lost or afraid in the night.*

*From here at the manger, we ask you to stay
close by us as we try to walk in your way;
confronting the powers and growing in grace
as those who most need you, come bearing your face.*

*Let us who have plenty, give those who have less;
an offer of shelter, a friendship to bless,
asylum for refugees, food for the poor,
shared tables of comfort and wide open doors.*

*From manger to marketplace, Jesus come near
and whisper your wonder to our waiting ears.
Bring healing and freedom, bring hope and release
so all of creation can breathe in your peace.*

SONG: [Away in a manger](#), alternate words by Rev. Jenny Gordon,
Yarra Ranges Parish, Uniting Church in Australia. Used with permission.

10. Candle Lighting

Ian and Dave

We re-light the Advent candles for hope, peace, joy and love.

...

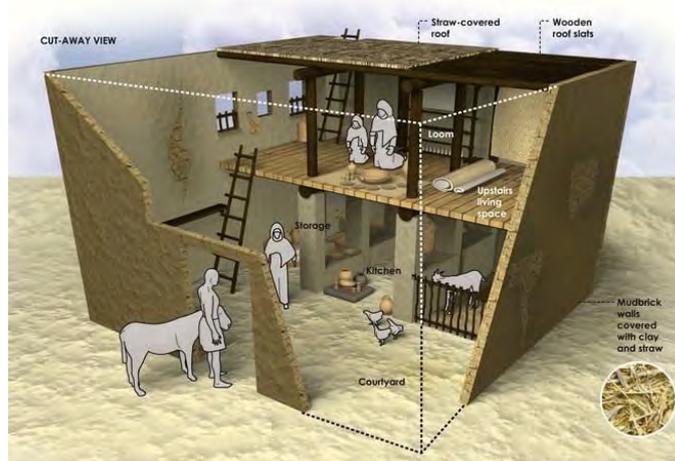
We light this candle, the Christ Candle for Jesus
a precious baby laid in a manger
whose voice we hear calling us to follow him
as he turns the world upside down.

11. With the Children

Dave



Gather around the nativity scene we have been creating. A little bit to add, today – but just wait...



See, think, wonder with kids looking at the image on screen of the 1st century Israeli home.

Then bring out the three lego versions of this. Adapt the nativity scene, add Jesus in.

Key message: he was born on the margins, but in the midst of a loving community. Not out in the freezing cold. But surrounded by love, on the margins of society.

Children's activities in kids corner.

12. Song: Born in the Night, TiS 323

- Born in the night, Mary's child,
a long way from your home:
coming in need, Mary's child,
born in a borrowed room.*
- Clear shining light, Mary's child,
your face lights up our way:
light of the world, Mary's child,
dawn on our darkened day.*
- Truth of our life, Mary's child,
you tell us God is good:
prove it is true, Mary's child.
Go to your cross of wood.*
- Hope of the world, Mary's child,
you're coming soon to reign:
king of the earth, Mary's child,
walk in our streets again.*

SONG: Born in the night, by Geoffrey Ainger, from Together in Song, Harper Collins *Religious*, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502; ALSO Reproduced with permission by CCLI license no. 247623

13. Bible Readings Isaiah 9:2-7

Gwen: 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.

You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

Geoff: For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

14. Gospel Reading Luke 2:1-20

Gwen: 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.

Geoff: 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 Savior, 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 favors!”

Gwen: 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.

Geoff: 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. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Gwen and Geoff: For these words of witness and for Christ the Word: ***Thanks be to God***

15. Reflection

Ian

...all who heard were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

All were amazed. When was the last time you were amazed by something? What comes to mind? What is amazing to you?

Today I'm going to share a few things that have amazed me lately. None more so than the birth of Jesus, and I'll get to that, but first...

Amazing thing number 1. Every day I walk past a building site on my way from my home to this church – just another high density, multistorey apartment building such as are going up all over Brunswick. And every day I stop and look in amazement at the marvels undertaken to create that ubiquitous structure. They began by digging a two-storey deep hole in the ground – how did they get the digger out when they finished? – I don't even know, I missed that move. Perhaps



they lifted it out with the towering crane they've raised in the middle of it all – it goes right down to the bottom and they're building up around it – how are they going to get that crane out when they've finished? Since this photo was taken, I watched them build formwork and pour concrete and add floors and a curved driving ramp into the lower carpark, and it just blows my mind – what we are capable of – and it's only reached street level. It will be just an ordinary apartment building, but for me it is an amazing glimpse into this strange foreign world of “construction” – that world where the coronavirus dares not go. Ordinary to builders, but amazing to me.

And the characters in the Christmas story are also amazed by an ordinary thing that humans do. The birth of a child. I've been present at the birth of a couple of children, and it is amazing in a horrifying kind of way. But blood and screaming aside, that is how we all began – it is the amazingly ordinary way that the underground carpark of human life is constructed. We've all been there, so why is the birth of Jesus so amazing as to be worthy of a massive religious and cultural festival 2000 years later? It is to do with the future of this child, isn't it? – the upper storeys yet to be constructed, who he will become. And I think it is amazing to contemplate this, not just for him, but for every child freshly emerged into the world with an open future. How will they fill it? Who will they become? We've all been that child, amazing in ordinariness with a future to build. And that is where God, the spirit of creative, healing love, meets us today.

Amazing thing number 2. There was quite a bit of COVID gardening done at our home in 2020 while I was away in Bairnsdale – which means that there are now a number of new plants in our garden which are flowering for the first time this Kangaroo Apple season and I don't know what they are or what to expect of them. It's like creation unwrapping surprise presents for me. One of them turned out to be a waratah. I watched through September as a stick with a few leaves grew this enormous bud which gradually opened revealing this mass of reddening involucral bracts – yes, I googled it – involucral bracts. And it is not just their name that is amazing – they emerge in wonder from nowhere for a week or two and then wither away again into nothing. We do live in an amazing universe, on an amazing planet.



And this child is somehow at the centre of all this wonder? – an ordinary child born the ordinary way who is nonetheless blossoming with the inflorescence of creative love, the divine source of all time and space. At least, that's what the angels reckon. According to them, this child is the long-expected saviour of the world about whom prophets have spoken, he is good news of great joy for all people. And everyone there in the Bethlehem stable, upstairs and downstairs, is like: "Woh, this is amazing, I can't believe it, the prophecy is actually coming true!" They're all going off, except for one person: all who heard it were amazed ... But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. Because, you see, amazement on its own is not enough.

Amazing thing number 3. 90% of adult Australians are double vaxxed. Can you believe it? Our news feeds focus a lot on the other 10%, and yes many of them are in Aboriginal communities and other vulnerable places, and there is our friend Omicron threatening to breach our vaccine fortress unless we all get a third dose (as you can see, mine is due in 3 days). It's not over, much is still to be endured, but for today, Christmas Day, I just want to rest in the amazement for a while. We vaccinated 90% of adult Australia. We did that together as a national community despite all our divisions and that painfully slow start – amazing. Sure, amazement is not enough to get us through the complexities of life under a pandemic, it is not enough to build faith and hope upon. But it is a start. Today Mary gives us a good model for resting in the amazement without blocking out the challenges to come. She treasures what has been told to her about this child and she ponders what it might mean.



What Mary doesn't do is jump to Christmas certainties that say, "I know who God is and what God is about, and I embrace that God with blind faith or I reject that God with atheist conviction!" Mary doesn't give in to the brittle certainties that shut out the unexpected and fear the unknown. She treasures and she ponders as she waits to see what will happen.

Here's something I hadn't noticed about Mary in the Gospel of Luke until this week. She is the only character who is there both at the very beginning before Jesus is born, and at the very end after he has died. She is very prominent at the start of the story where our focus is today, and then she is mentioned in passing in the middle of the gospel, just to remind us that she is still

there, looking, listening, treasuring, pondering. Then she appears in the sequel to Luke's gospel, the Acts of the Apostles. Acts opens with the departure of the risen Jesus, and then, writes Luke, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying. Then Luke lists the 11 remaining disciples who are there and says, All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus.



So, Mary is there, explicitly named among the disciples in the upper room, when another birth occurs: a rush of wind, tongues of heavenly fire, tongues of earthly speech – Pentecost, the birth of the church – our birth as the community of Christ, his continuing body in the world. Mary is there, linking Christmas and Pentecost.

Think of the amazing things Mary will witness and ponder on her way from Christmas to Pentecost. She will be amazed as her little new-born blossoms like a flower into a great teacher and wonder worker with the power of the creator in him. Mary will be amazed as he confronts evil, demolishing the status structures of their society, and building a new world from the ground up, a new world centred on a new community of healing love. She will treasure these things, but amazement will not be enough to stop the harsh rejection of her son's new way for the world by the powers of the status quo. She will ultimately suffer the loss of her son, cradling his dead body, just as she cradled him as a new-born. Grief will pierce her soul.

She will treasure, hold close and ponder it all, the whole story, and despite terrible personal cost, she will still be there at the end which turns out to be a new beginning. She is there, faithfully following, convinced that the angel's message of divine healing love for the world rises out the death of her son. You see, the amazing, good news of great joy for all people which was born through Mary, continues in Mary and in all those who have been touched by the Spirit of her child and have pondered his life and death through the ages – including us here today.

What amazes you? What do you treasure? What are you led to ponder?

And from your pondering, from our pondering together, what amazing building of life might be constructed? What amazing bloom of love might flower? What amazing community of hope might be nurtured?

Merry Christmas. Have an amazing day.

16. Song: What Child is this? AoV1-165

Ian

*1. What Child is this who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and Angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

*2. Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.*

*Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

*3. So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come peasant, king to own Him;
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise a song on high,
The Virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

SONG: [What child is this](#), by William C. Dix. 1827-1898,
from As One Voice 1, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd. PUBLIC Domain

17. Prayers of the People

Kirsty

Let us pray:

Hope of the world, Mary's child
We pray for hope in places of darkness, in places of despair,
For people who are struggling, for people who are ill.

Mary's child, peace of the world,
We pray for peace in places of violence,
On the battlefields, in cities, and in our homes.

Joy of the world, Mary's child,
We pray that the church will be a place of joy,
Joy in serving you, and each other.

Mary's child, love of the world,
We pray that love will prevail,
That love will heal and mend our troubled places.

Christ Child, the newborn King,
May we hold you in our arms as we live our lives,
Knowing that you will hold us too.

Amen.

18. Blessing and Sending

Ian

If you would like to make a donation to the Christmas Bowl Appeal there is a bowl on the table by the day. All money given today will be sent to the Christmas Bowl. We commend the work of the Act for Peace Christmas Bowl Appeal.

Friends go now in peace. Go in the peace of the Christ Child.
Go to treasure with amazement all that is coming to us through him, through his birth.
Go to ponder the challenges of faith, of the challenges of life
all of which Christ enters and embraces with us.
Go in that peace, with that encouragement and hope
Go to have a joyous day and go to love one another as God has loved us in Christ Jesus
Go to love your neighbour as yourself
Go with the blessing of our God the source of all life and love
The child in the manger and the Spirit of Peace.
In the name of Christ, Amen

19. Song: Angels from the Realms of Glory, TiS 309

*1. Angels, from the realms of glory
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Heralds of creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.*

*Come and worship Christ the newborn King.
Come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.*

*2. Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Watching over flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
Yonder shines the infant light:*

*3. Wise men, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations;
You have seen His natal star.*

*4. Though an infant now we view him,
he shall fill his Father's throne,
gather all the nations to him;
every knee shall then bow down:*

SONG: [Angels from the realms of glory](#), by James Montgomery,
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

20. Closing verse on screen

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

21. Thank you

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Acknowledgement of
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Reflection:
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