

Order of Service 15/12/2021 Blue Christmas

Opening verse:

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

Worship Space/Sanctuary

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship and Acknowledgement of Country

Ian

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all.

And also with you

Welcome...

This is the place of Christmas – the land of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people of the Kulin nation. As we gather to enter into the mystery of the incarnation tonight, we acknowledge and honour their elders and ancestors – all those who have called this place home, who live on it now and who may be our partners of reconciliation in the future.

Come as you are, with all that you are. Amidst the bustle of the Christmas season may you find a place of peace here tonight.

Song: **Silent Night, TiS 311**

[Listen here](#)

*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

Introduction to the stations

Ian

Tonight, during our service, we will hear the Christmas story read in 4 sections, we will light 4 Advent candles for hope, peace, joy and love and respond to these themes with simple actions. May God's Holy Spirit be with us to guide us.

Breathe deep...

Gospel reading

Meg

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. (Luke 2:1-4)

Hope

Saide

The candle is set on a plinth, in front of the wreath, surrounded by small branches from the trees by the Acknowledgement of Country sculpture.

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. I wonder what Joseph thought of this mandated disruption to his otherwise possibly predictable life. Was it an easy journey? Did he have to pack much? Was he upset about it? Did he approach the journey with stoicism or trepidation? Was he hopeful and if he was, what was he hoping for? We can't know, we don't know. All we know is that he went.

As we turn our attention to the birth of Jesus let's ask 'What are we hoping for as a nation, a people of God? What are you hoping for right now?' Let's take a moment now to tune into the world that we live in. Not the world that Joseph lived in but our world right now. What touches your heart? We know our world is suffering, people are suffering. Our planet is groaning under the weight of decades of greed and lack of care. First Peoples of this land and many lands are continuing to suffer, their voices not heard, their stories, language and culture dismissed as irrelevant. What are you grieving for right now? How is your heart breaking?

On the first Sunday in Advent Ian spoke about Nick Cave's broken-hearted optimism. Speaking about the precarious moment we are living through Nick said '*I have hope that collective grief can bring extraordinary change, a kind of conversion of the spirit and with it a great opportunity*'. So take a moment now to tune into the grief that you carry for our planet, for people who are suffering and know that we do not grieve alone. As a grieving people we can place our hope in the God who comes to as a baby, to bring about extraordinary change.



Advent candle prayer

Ian

Anew we tell the ancient tale, coming to the story circle of lights. This first flickering is to banish darkness.

This is the candle of Hope.

Let us honour the Light!

Song: Hope is a light

[Listen here](#)

*Hope is a light, hope is a light.
Hope is a light to show the way,
hope is a light to show the way.
Light the candle of hope,
light the candle of hope.*

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Action

Take some leaves from the branches, holding them as we move to the chapel space, carrying with us the hope we have in Jesus. The Hope candle will travel with us to the chapel space. You are welcome to stand in the pews and around the space.

Chapel space

Gospel reading

Ray

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. (Luke 2:5-7)

Peace

Saïde

The Peace candle is on the chapel space table for people to light tapers. The Hope candle is set beside it.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. I wonder what this experience was like for Mary, possibly accompanied only by Joseph. The scene sounds so, simple, idyllic and peaceful. No mention of terror, birth pains, how long it took, who cleaned up the blood and everything that goes with birthing. Mary gave birth and laid her firstborn son in a manger – that's it, that's all we've got.

Stories shape our lives, our understanding of the world we live in. And it can be all too easy to seek out stories that confirm what we already know, to close our eyes and ears to the harm that is done to others by powerful people and governments. This evening we are turning our attention to the suffering and injustice in Iran.

Ian spoke of the challenges

On the second Sunday in Advent Ian reminded us of Isaiah's prophecy that '*God will bring a human King descended from David the son of Jesse, who will provide justice for the poor and oppressed, peace in human society*'. Thankyou friends for sharing your grief and longing for peace. Let's hold these stories in our hearts as we pray.



Advent prayer

Ian

Here we tell the ancient tale, coming to the story circle of lights. This second flame is to bring balance and the promise of harmony. **This is the candle of Peace. Let us honour the Light!**

Song: Peace is a prayer

[Listen here](#)

*Peace is a prayer, peace is a prayer.
Peace is a prayer that starts with me,
peace is a prayer that starts with me.
Light the candle of peace,
light the candle of peace.*

Action

Light a taper as you offer your prayers for peace, for Iran and for all places where peace is a dream. When you have lit your taper please move to the baptismal font. We will sing Infant Holy as we gather.

Baptismal Font

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, head 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

Meg

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. (Luke 2:8-11)

Joy

Saide

The Joy candle is set behind the Baptismal font, Hope and Peace candles are placed alongside.

'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people ...'. What a perplexing experience for the shepherds. There they are minding their flocks and an angel appears. Who wouldn't be terrified at such an experience? And yet in their terror they receive an extraordinary message, a life-changing message, a birthing they could probably barely make sense of.

Every year, every day, every moment our lives are being shaped by our experiences. We have loved and lost. We have walked alone in the shadow of darkness. We have been held by the communities that know us, that know our stories. In these few moments remember the loved ones you have lost, remember the joy you experienced in knowing them, in loving them, remember the way in which they have shaped your life, remember the joy that you brought to their lives. Remember the loved ones who suffer now whether in illness or grief or loss. Hold this remembering gently, hold your own pain gently. Breathe joy into the remembering.

Ian reminded us, last Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent *'that Joy when it comes emerges from a complex landscape of emotion'*, setting this amidst the two great stories of our faith – the birth and death of Jesus. He reminded us that *'God enters into and emerges from our birthing and our dying with life-changing love'*. Let's remember the quiet joy of having loved and lost.

Advent prayer

Ian

Here we tell the ancient tale, coming to the story circle of lights
This third light is to bring delight and rejoicing.

This is the candle of Joy.

Let us honour the Light!



Song: Joy is a song

[Listen here](#)

*Joy is a song, joy is a song.
Joy is a song for all to sing,
joy is a song for all to sing.
Light the candle of joy,
light the candle of joy.*

Action

Float your leaves, giving thanks for all that brings you joy, even in the darkest of times.

When you have floated your leaf or leaves, move to the Communion Table.

Communion Table

Gospel Reading

Ray

The angel said, "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!"

(Luke 2:12-14)

Love

Saide

Place the Hope, Peace and Joy candles with the Love candle in the wreath

This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. The angel gives the terrified shepherds a clear sign and is then joined by a multitude of other angels who set about praising God. Quite likely a very overwhelming experience.

More than two millennia later what does this sign mean for us? What does this sign say about love? About God's steadfast love? How did love enter the world again with Jesus' first breath? Love can change the world one breath, one word, one touch, one song, one action at a time. Love can heal our broken hearts, not minimizing our grieving, but weaving it into the story of who we are and will be. Love creates space for forgiveness, for compassion, for grace to brighten the darkness. What is your experience of loving and being loved?

This coming Sunday, the fourth in the season of Advent we will read Joseph's story, visited by an angel to explain the circumstances of Jesus' birth. Was he, a righteous man, moved by love to accept this radical change in his life? We are not told but his response suggests more than obligation and his life was changed. Let's open our hearts again tonight to the radical life changing love of God.

Advent prayer

Ian

We continue the story of generations,
Telling a story into the circle of lights.
This fourth light is for compassion and heart.

**This is the candle of LOVE.
Let us honour the Light!**



Song: Love is a gift [Listen here](#)

*Love is a gift, love is a gift.
Love is a gift our hearts can give,
love is a gift our hearts can give.
Light the candle of love,
light the candle of love.*

Eucharist

Ian

Action

Celebration of Holy Communion

First we say thank you to God.
*[practice saying words, **Thank you God!**]*

For everything you have created:

Thank you God!

For loving the world so much that you came to be with us in Jesus:

Thank you God!

For guiding us through each day by your Holy Spirit in us:

Thank you God!

Next remember Jesus by telling the story of his last meal. In it Jesus says: **Remember me**
*[practice saying words, **remember me**]*

On the night before he died, Jesus was having a meal with his disciples.

He took a loaf of bread from the table, said thank you to God,

broke it into pieces and gave it to his friends saying,

This is my body given for you. Whenever you eat it,

remember me.

Break bread

After they had eaten, he took a cup of wine and shared it with them saying,

This is my blood poured out in love,

so that no one will ever be separate from God.

Whenever you drink it,

remember me.

Raise cup

Next we pray that the Holy Spirit will come and unite us with Jesus and one another.

*[practice saying words, **Come Holy Spirit**]*

On this bread

Come Holy Spirit

On this cup

Come Holy Spirit

On us all

Come Holy Spirit

Make us one -
one with Jesus,
one with each other,
one family of God.

In the name of God who loves us: **Amen!**

In the name of Jesus who is with us: **Amen!**

In the name of the Holy Spirit who helps us every day: **Amen!**

**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.**



Serving

Ian and Saide serve bread then glasses.

Advent prayer – Christ Candle

Ian

We continue the story of rebirth,
Telling a story into the circle of lights.
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. (Isaiah 9:2)
This final light is for our own rebirth.
**This is the candle for CHRIST,
born once again among us.
Let us honour the Light!**

Song: Jesus is born

[Listen here](#)

*Jesus is born, Jesus is born.
Jesus is born in us today,
Jesus is born in us today:
Christ, the light of the world,
Christ, the light of the world.*

Closing words

Saide

This evening we have lit the Advent candles for Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, telling the story of Jesus' birth into the circle of lights. Take all that you have heard and remembered into the night honouring Christ, the light of the world.

And may the hope, peace, joy and love of the Christ child be always with you.

And also with you.

Exchange a sign of peace with one another...

Song: Born in the night, TiS 323

[Listen here](#)

*1. Born in the night, Mary's child,
a long way from your home;
coming in need, Mary's child,
born in a borrowed room.*

*2. Clear shining light, Mary's child,
your face lights up our way;
light of the world, Mary's child,
dawn on our darkened day.*

*3. 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.*

*4. 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.*

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Blessing and Sending

Ian

May there be a place for you
at the side of the Christ Child
this Christmas:
a place of hope,
where you are
encompassed by love,
filled with joy,
and moved to peace.

Go in peace with a blessing
from the Source of Christmas love
through the child in the manger
by the Spirit who sings joy in us.

Amen.



Closing verse:

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

Thank yous

Thank you for joining us, and thank you to...

Liturgists:

Saide Cameron
Ian Ferguson

Bible readers:

Ray Cameron
Meg Orton

Reflections:

Saide Cameron

Joy sculpture:

Simone Alesich

Musicians:

Natalie Sims
(coordinator)
Glenice Cook
Kate Scull
Maggie Somerville
Shawn Whelan

Images:

Ian Ferguson

Editing/production

Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron