

Order of Service 24/12/2022 Christmas Eve

Opening verse:

O come all ye faithful

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Saide

Wominjeka. Welcome.
Come let us worship God
who meets us in the quiet darkness
bearing gifts of hope, peace, joy and love.
Let's breathe together
as we travel with Mary and Joseph
to the manger to receive the greatest gift of all.

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 breathe together again, inviting the Holy Spirit to breathe in us as we sing.

Song - O Come all ye faithful, TiS 304, vs 1, 2 & 6

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!*

3 *See how the shepherds, summoned to His cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with holy fear;
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;*

6. *Sing choirs of angels, sing in exaltation,
sing all ye citizens of heaven above,
"Glory to God, glory in the highest":*

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

Welcome and Introduction

Saide

Good evening I'm Saide and with Ian, Jenne, Kirsty and Alistair 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.

Earlier this evening our young people took us on a Christmas Creature Adventure. Continuing this theme, this evening we will be listening to the voices of creation as they speak to us of the Christmas gifts of hope, peace, joy and love. We will gradually fill the church with candlelight as we get closer to the birth of Christ and then you will be invited to light your own candle. If you are worshipping online please light candles in your space if you have them available.

Prayer of Invocation

Ian

Breathe deep Let us pray
Word of Life
cradled in the manger,
swaddled in love,
sung by angels,
sought by shepherds:
come to us this night
that we may hear you
strong and insistent,
that we may sing you
clear and exuberant,
that we may cradle you in our hearts
full of life's vitality.
Amen

Gospel Reading - Annunciation

Luke 1:26-33

Jenne

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.'

Hope

Reflection (from the grasslands)

Soundscapes begins softly

God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary offering her a greeting of hope. Listen for hope now in sounds from the grasslands – the home of emus, snakes, echidnas, dingoes, bilbies, kangaroos, insects, frogs, wallabies, wombats, parakeets – with wide open spaces and hidden places, burrows and hollows and waterholes.

Pause to listen

Let go of the burdens of the year that has been, just for a moment. Discover hope in the vastness of this great land in which we live and in the wide-open spaces of our Creator's steadfast love. Let's breathe in the Christmas gift of hope.

Pause to listen

Advent Candle

We light this candle for hope

May we hear the angels of the grasslands speaking to us

We give thanks for the Christmas gift of hope

Song – O Little Town of Bethlehem, TiS 316 verses 1-2

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.*

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

Gospel Reading - Response

Luke 1:38

Jenne

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.

Peace

Reflection (from the rainforests)

Soundscape begins softly

Mary responds to the Angel with peaceful resolve laced with wonder and trepidation. Listen for the gift of peace now in the voices of the creatures who inhabit the rainforests - delicate striped possums, thousands of tiny bats, spectacular lizards, amazing frogs, colourful butterflies and birds, and a multitude of insects living in shaded spaces, moist undergrowth, dappled sunlight.

Pause to listen

Let go of the troubles in our world, just for a moment. Discover peace in the blessing of the rainforests that grace our island continent and in the compassionate love of Jesus our Saviour. Let's breathe in the Christmas gift of peace.

Pause to listen

Advent Candle

We light this candle for peace

May we hear the angels of the rainforest speaking to us

We give thanks for the Christmas gift of peace

Song – O Little Town of Bethlehem, TiS 316 verses 3-4

*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.*

Gospel Reading – Rejoice

Luke 1:46-48a, 52-53

Jenne

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.

Joy

Reflection (from the oceans)

Soundscape begins softly

Mary rejoices in God her Saviour. Listen now for the gift of joy in the voices of the creatures who inhabit the shores and oceans – wader birds, penguins, fish, dolphins and whales, in the depths of the sea and in coral reefs, rockpools, beaches and wetlands.

Pause to listen

Let go of the worries that shape your day, just for a moment. Discover joy in the wonder of the waters that are home to abundant life, and in the life giving joy of being held in God's love. Let's breathe in the Christmas gift of joy.

Pause to listen

Advent Candle

We light this candle for joy
May we hear the angels of the shores and oceans speaking to us
We give thanks for the Christmas gift of joy

Song – Once in Royal David's city, TiS 312 vs 1 & 2

*Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.*

*He came down to earth from heaven,
who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor, despised and lowly,
lived on earth our Savior holy.*

SONG: [Once in royal David's city](#), by Cecil Frances Alexander,
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Gospel Reading – Birth

Luke 2:1-7

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

Jenne

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 in the guest room.

Love

Reflection (from the skies)

Soundscape begins softly

Mary wrapped her son in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger. A simple act of love, of comfort and care. Listen now for the gift of love in the voices of the creatures who inhabit the skies – eagles, parrots, owls, fairy wrens, kookaburras, honey eaters, wattle birds.

Pause to listen

Let go of the heartache that you carry, just for a moment. Discover love in the glory of the skies, and in the sure knowledge that we are loved beyond our understanding. Let's breathe in the Christmas gift of love.

Pause to listen

Advent Candle

We light this candle for love
May we hear the angels of the skies speaking to us
We give thanks for the Christmas gift of love

Song – What child is this, AoV1-165, vs 1 & 3

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?*

*Refrain: This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring him praise,
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.*

SONG: Once in royal David's city, by Cecil Frances Alexander,
from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Gospel Reading – Do not be afraid

Luke 2:8-19

Jenne

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.

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

We will bring the light to you, please pass it along to your neighbours as we sing Silent Night.

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

Prayers of the People

Kirsty

Creating God,
who comes to us this night as a tiny child:

We pray for this earth,
for the health of the air that sustains life.
May the Christmas gift of hope
inspire us all to work for the health of the planet.

We pray for this earth,
for all the creatures that live upon it.
May the Christmas gift of peace
bring harmony among us so that all creatures may live.

We pray for this earth,
for the soil and plants and trees that feed and nourish life.
May the Christmas gift of joy
remind us of the marvel and preciousness of life.

We pray for this earth,
for all its diversity and variety and difference.
May the Christmas gift of love
empower us to embrace all who live on this planet.

We offer these prayers at the crib of a tiny child,
a Christ child born to change the world.
May we be agents of change with him. Amen.

Holy Communion

Ian

Invitation

Traditionally, in our society, we celebrate Christmas by feasting, by joining with family and friends around tables laden with food. We do the same here tonight. You are invited to share in the Holy Meal of Christian faith – all are welcome whether you have been here many times or not at all, recently or not for a long time. At this meal we celebrate God's gift of Jesus and unite ourselves with him and with one another by performing one of the most basic human acts, an act that gives us life, eating together.

This meal is not just happening here, but is being shared by Christ's people all around the world tonight. We eat a small piece of bread and drink a small cup of juice, remembering that God gives abundant life for all. Come and be fed together with the love born among us tonight.

Narrative of Institution

We look back on this Christmas night, from the perspective of another night.

On the night of his arrest,
the Lord Jesus took bread,
gave thanks to God,
broke it
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take, eat.
this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper, he took the cup,
gave thanks and gave it to them saying:

Drink from this all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant
poured out for you and for everyone
for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, whenever you drink it,
for the remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread
and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Great Thanksgiving

Breathe in thanksgiving for God's Christmas gifts...

For your gifts to us in creation.

Thank you God

For your greatest gift, Jesus born in Bethlehem.

Thank you God

And for the gift keeps on giving, your Holy Spirit within us.

Thank you God

As the angels sang for the shepherds,
let us also sing glory to God
the gracious giver of life and love.

*Holy (Holy), holy, (holiness)
holiness Lord of power and might.
Heaven (Heaven), earth (earth)
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
All glory to your name. (All glory to your name.)
All glory to your name. (All glory to your name.)
Blessed (Blessed), blessed (blessed)
is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Blessed (Blessed), blessed (blessed)
is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest. (Hosanna in the highest.)
Hosanna in the highest. (Hosanna in the highest.)*

The breaking of the bread

As Jesus broke bread with his disciples,
we break this bread from one loaf into many pieces.
And when we share and eat those many pieces
we pray that the Holy Spirit will make us one –
one body with Jesus, one family born of divine love.

So we pray 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 eating together this Christmas night.

In the name of the Christ Child, God's people say. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

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.

The Communion

Come and be fed at the manger.

Musicians to sing carols during distribution.

The peace

The light, the love and the peace of the Christ child be with you all.

And also with you.

Exchange the peace of Christ with your neighbour

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

Blessing and Sending

Ian

Go into this holy night
with the blessing of our God,
the Source of Christmas love
the child in the manger
the Spirit who sings joy in us.

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.

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 prove
the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.*
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SONG: [Joy to the world](#), by Isaac Watts, 1674-1748,
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Thank yous

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

Liturgists:

Saide Cameron
Ian Ferguson

Bible readers:

Jenne Perlstein

Reflection:

Saide Cameron

Prayers of the People:

Kirsty Bennett

Musicians:

Alistair Hunter
(co-ordinator)
Andrew Dickinson
Mikul Denison
Elaine Potter
Kate Scull

Postlude Song: 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 Kvansakul, Catherine Leslie,
Annie Quail, Helen Rowe, Natalie Sims,
Amelia Ware, Daniel Whelan

Images:

Ian Ferguson
Craig Manners – unsplash
David Clode – unsplash
TJ Fitzsimmons – unsplash

Editing / Production:

Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
Ian Ferguson
Alistair Hunter
Mal Rowe

Closing verse:

Joy to the world!