



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the triune God, the Creator of heaven and earth and God's ownership of all things (Psalm 24:1). In God's sovereignty, God has allowed other groups to migrate to these shores. We acknowledge the cultures of our First Nations Peoples and are thankful for the community that we share together now.

Cantor's welcome

Cantor: Thank you for joining our midnight Service on this most holy night. Tonight we gather in silent adoration, awaiting in expectation the birth of our Saviour King. I invite you to stand to sing our opening hymn.

Opening Song: O Come All Ye Faithful

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!

Chorus
*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord*

True God of true God,
Light of Light eternal
Lo, He abhors not
the Virgin's womb
Son of the Father,
begotten, not created

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation
Sing, all ye citizens
of heaven above!
Glory to God, All glory
in the highest

Chorus
*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord*

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
born this happy morning
Jesus, to Thee be glory given
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing.

See how the shepherds
summoned to his cradle
leaving their flocks,
draw nigh with holy fear
we too will thither bend our
joyful footsteps

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Minister's Welcome

The Lord our God the Almighty Reigns.

Let us rejoice and exalt and give God the glory.

Glory to God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

as in the beginning, so now, and for ever. Amen.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light: for to us a child is born, to us a Son is given. (Isaiah 9:2.6)

Prayer of Approach

Deacon: *With expectant steps, and hearts filled with adoration, we approach God's throne of grace praying,*

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy

Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Gloria

On this most holy night when the angels pronounced Christ's birth to the shepherds, let us join in their heavenly song,

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the
Father. Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Wondrous and majestic Father, all glory to you for the gift of your Son, who you sent to save us. With the angels, let us praise your name, and tell the earth his story, that all may believe, rejoice, and proclaim your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Ministry of the Word

The first reading is from the second book of Isaiah Chapter 9 beginning at verse 2 to 7.

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

³ You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. ⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.
Hear the word of the Lord **thanks be to God.**

**The Psalm for today is number 96,
beginning at verse 1 to 10.**

¹ Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

**² Sing to the LORD, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.**

³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous deeds among all peoples.

**⁴ For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.**

⁵ For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

**⁶ Splendour and majesty are before him;
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.**

⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

**⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.**

⁹ Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.

**¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.**

Glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
as in the beginning, so now and for ever. Amen.

The second reading comes from the letter of Titus, chapter 2 commencing at verse 11.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Song: O Come O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, O come,
Thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes,
on Sinai's height
in ancient times didst
give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.

O come, Thou rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell

Thy people save,
and give them victory
o'er the grave.

O come, Thou dayspring
come and cheer
our spirits by Thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy
clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows
put to flight.

O Come, Thou Key
of David, come
and open wide
our heavenly home;
make safe the way
that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.

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**The Gospel of our Lord, according to Luke, Chapter 2,
verses 1 to 14. Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2** (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. **5** He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7** and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

This is the Gospel of our Lord **Praise to you, Lord Jesus
Christ.**

The Message:

Let us gaze on our vulnerable, Almighty God

It's the holy night of Christmas, the night our Saviour was born. I like to imagine myself there in the quiet stable. Even with all the animals, shepherds coming and going ... what remains are two new parents, gazing in the eyes of their newborn baby. I'm sure they each would have whispered to themselves 'What a miracle this child is'.

Such a scene reminds me of a sentence from one of Charles Wesley's hymns:

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail, incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.*

These words capture something of the mystery and essence of Christmas. The very foundation of everything that we celebrate on this holy night finds itself in a divine movement from God towards the world. That baby in a manger in Bethlehem is God reaching out to humanity. That baby is God giving himself to us. In the person of Jesus, God becomes exactly as we are. God experiences life just as we do, with all its glorious senses, emotions, and feelings. God experiences birth and death like us.

What we celebrate at Christmas is so much more than just the story of the miraculous birth of a baby. We celebrate the mysterious moment of the Incarnation – the great coming together of the divine and the human in one person. All of a sudden, God is no longer a divine being who is 'out there', far beyond us. No longer is God distant, unreachable and unknowable. No longer can we complain, 'Lord you don't know how hard it is to be here on earth.' For the Spirit of God whispers back, 'Oh yes I do. For I chose to enter in.'" In the person of Jesus, God became flesh, God became one of us. A real man with whom we could have a personal relationship. God reached across the whole expanse of time and

space, spanning eternity to come to us in that particular moment two thousand years ago.

This was beyond momentous. The consequences of that moment led us into a whole new understanding. It was a complete paradigm shift. What, then, does this tell us about God?

Over the years we have grappled with the big philosophical qualities of God's nature.

-God is omniscient – all-knowing, aware of the past, present, and future all at the same time.

-God is omnipresent – He is everywhere, there is no place he is not

-God is omnipotent – all-powerful, without any limitations

-and God is immutable – he does not change, His nature is forever the same.

These awe-inspiring characteristics of God are boggling, our minds cannot process who this all-encompassing, all-mighty divine being is. Yet at Christmas, this glorious, almighty God chooses to reveal himself to us in what certainly appears to be the complete opposite of all these qualities I just mentioned.

The all-knowing God comes as an untaught, illiterate, speechless new-born. The omnipresent God becomes confined to use a feeding trough as a bed. The all-powerful God comes as a weak, fragile framed human being. The unchanging God comes as a profoundly needy, utterly dependent baby. What a cataclysmic step this is for a supreme being, in whatever way we choose to describe it. This is the utter absurdity that sits at the heart of Christmas, the oxymoron at the core of the incarnation. The supreme power of God shown to us in the supreme vulnerability of a new-born baby.

Remember those words of Charles Wesley -

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail, incarnate Diety!
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.*

The Incarnation is a conscious self-diminishing on the part of God. For God to come in such weakness and defencelessness is truly a remarkable move. For we see in the birth of Jesus, a moment when God gives all that God can possibly give. God entering in such vulnerability really is an amazing, selfless and generous act on the part of God.

When God poured out all that he was into a helpless baby, it was, at that time, God's ultimate act of love toward humanity. Although we know God would later show the world an even greater demonstration of his love towards the world, at this time, God's choice to come in such a vulnerable way was a risk of monumental proportions. It is certainly not too much of a stretch for us to say that in Jesus, God put all that he is on the line.

At Christmas, we find a God who is prepared to be vulnerable. We find a God who is prepared to take the most astonishing risks. We find a God who is prepared to take all that He is and give it to us.

What does this in turn tell us about us? The Scriptures tell us we are made in the image of God. This is one of the guiding principles of faith: that somehow humanity reflects the nature of God. Too often, though, we've taken this to mean that we reflect the supreme aspects of God's being. We like to see ourselves as the God ordained supreme rulers of our world – powerful, clever, able to undertake great feats and endeavours.

However, it did not take long for us to realise, we are not equipped to run this world without the guidance and counsel of the Creator. Every day we are confronted with the truth that we do not feel so confident about the prospect of running our lives, all by ourselves. So, with the tools of social media, we create images of the exciting events of lives, which seldom portray the reality that lurks off the screen.

You see we don't want others to know the messiness that lurks deep within. We want people to see our strength, our power, our

cleverness, all the wonderful things that we achieve. So much so, that we often hide our vulnerability, and the hurts we carry around.

For years we have heard society preach its message: 'you've got to look after yourself – because you are all you've got'? But, when we gaze at the child in the manger we see, thank goodness, that it's a slogan that's not true. The Christmas story shows us a fundamentally different way of seeing ourselves, seeing this world and ultimately, seeing God. When we see that our God not only a supremely all-powerful being, but also One who is prepared to enter tremendous vulnerability because he cares.

We see the God in whose image we are made. This is the vulnerable God whose qualities we are meant to reflect. But just as we are often fearful to look into the mirror, to peer closely at who we really are, we are often too fearful to gaze at the beautiful image of the God, we are designed to reflect. But that is the call of Christmas - to gaze at the face of Christ, God in the manger.

Christmas calls us to contemplate this child in whom the nature of God and humanity are held in perfect balance. He calls us to gaze at the miracle of God's vulnerability of being with us. The more we gaze on the face of Jesus, the more we begin to reflect who he is. On this most holy night, let us pause to gaze on the face of God's ultimate expression of love, the gift of himself to be with us.

Let us hold our gaze until we see His face gazing back at us, and through his gaze we are reassured that God's gift of himself is one the world can never take away. And because we bear his image, let us be prepared to enter into places where we too show our vulnerability – so that others will see the face of God through us.

The Prayer of the Week

Almighty God, you make us glad each year through the expectation of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come as our judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Prayers for the world and our community

We gaze, Loving Father, at your glory that has been revealed, through the angels' message of peace and joy. We pray for the peoples of your world and for all your creation: for those in places still ravaged by war and unjust governmental structures. Comfort your people, at the time of your Son's coming, as we join in the angels' song, **Glory to God in the highest.**

We gaze, Loving Father, at your glory that has been revealed, for the good news that salvation is at hand. We pray for your church throughout the world: for leaders of churches in this land; for the clergy and people of this parish; for prophets who call for church to repent. Guide your church into truth and free it from corruption. Comfort your people, at the time of your Son's coming, as we join in the angels' song, **Glory to God in the highest.**

We gaze, Loving Father, at your glory that has been revealed, for the glorious Christmas message of reconciliation and love. We pray for our community: for our homes and our neighbours; for our schools, our hospitals and our workplaces. Comfort your people, at the time of your Son's coming, as we join in the angels' song, **Glory to God in the highest.**

We gaze, Loving Father, at your glory that has been revealed, for your good news of healing and wholeness. We pray for all in need of your comfort and care: We pray for the parishioners on our prayer list for God's healing and comfort. Comfort your people, at the time of your Son's coming, as we join in the angels' song, **Glory to God in the highest.**

Please join me in praying,

Fulfil now, Lord, our desires and prayers as may be best for us. Grant us in this life, knowledge of your truth and in the age to come, life eternal.

We conclude by praying as our Saviour taught us:

**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 forever. Amen.**

Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness

The Lord of light has come, bringing to light things which were hidden in darkness, thus disclosing the purposes of the heart. Knowing God's compassion to forgive, let us open our hearts by confessing our sins.

Merciful God, for the things we have done that we regret,
forgive us;

for the things we have failed to do, **forgive us;**

for the times we have acted without love, **forgive us;**

for the times we have acted without thinking, **forgive us;**

for our weakness, ignorance and wilfulness, **forgive us,**

and restore to us the joy and peace of your salvation.

Lord, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

Promise of Forgiveness

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**
The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you**

Thanksgiving and Communion

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.

We give you thanks and praise for our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us.

By his death on the cross and rising to new life, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, forever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the
highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and this wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread;
and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and giving it to his disciples, saying: 'Take, eat; this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples saying, 'Drink from this, all of you.'

This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

Renew us by our Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son, and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom and in whom, by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise.

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread and the Communion

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

We who are many are one body,

For we all share in the one bread.

Come and let us share in the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ and let us feed on him in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Two videos:

O Holy Night and Angels from the Realms of Glory

Commitment to live out our worship of the Lord

Living God, in this holy meal you fill us with new hope. May the power of your love, which we have known in word and sacrament, continue your saving work among us, give us courage for our journey, and bring us to the joys you promise.

Father, **we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.**

Let us go from this place proclaiming that we have seen the glory of God, believing that there is a light that shines in the darkness, which the darkness shall not overcome. And may the love of God the Father, the peace of Jesus the Son, and the joy of the Spirit, be with you this Christmas, and evermore. **Amen.**

Closing Song: Silent Night Holy Night

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin Mother and child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, Holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heav'nly hosts sing allelujah
Christ the Saviour is born
Christ the Saviour is born
Sleep in heavenly peace

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On this most holy night, may you sleep in the presence and peace of the Lord, **in the name of Christ. Amen.**