



Leura Uniting Church  
ORDER OF SERVICE, Christmas Day 2020  
Stephen White

Share the joy of Christmas!

333

**Advent Candles - Welcoming the Guest**

Advent hope moves us; Advent love leads us; Advent joy stirs us; Advent peace stills us, that we might affirm our King Jesus.

It is time we set flame to this Advent affirmation by lighting the Christ Candle.

[Christ candle is lit]

***We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. He was the long-awaited Messiah whose coming was prophesied. The same Jesus lives today in our hearts. He deserves our highest loyalty and total commitment. In Jesus Christ our hope is fulfilled; our love is consummated; our joy is complete; and our peace is sealed.***

Rejoice, a Saviour is born.

***A saviour is born, indeed. Joy to the world!***

**Song:** Come, let us walk the path of light

*Here's a little Advent candle song based on Isaiah 2:5  
words: Jennie Gordon © 2019  
tune: Twinkle, twinkle, little star*

5. Come, let's walk the path of light  
through the darkness of the night.  
Sing with hope and joy and peace,  
life emerges; love's increase.  
Christ is here, who makes us one.  
Christ is here, the day has come!

**Call to Worship**

Luke 2:10, 11 NIV

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. *11* Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

**Prayer of Adoration**

Rev Bruce Prewer

God of wonders, in your mercy please break through the clutter of Christmas trivia, and lead us again to utter wonder in the presence of your Holy Child, Jesus.

Shock us anew with this gloriously foolish thing you have done for us and our salvation.

Liberate thanksgiving in our souls and songs on our lips, that with all our being we may love and adore you.

In the name of Jesus, the Saviour who has come indeed. ***Amen!***

**Song** TIS 303 Hark the herald

1. Hark the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn king  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled  
Joyful all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With angelic hosts proclaim  
Christ is born in Bethlehem

Hark the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn king

2. Christ by highest heaven adored  
Christ the everlasting Lord  
Late in time behold him come  
Offspring of the virgin's womb  
Veiled in flesh the godhead see  
Hail the incarnate deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell  
Jesus our Emmanuel

Hark the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn king

3. Hail the heaven born prince of  
peace  
Hail the son of righteousness  
Light and life to all he brings  
Risen with healing in his wings  
Mild he lay his glory by  
Born that man no more may die  
Born to raise the songs of earth  
Born to give them second birth  
Hark the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn king

Hark the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn king

CCLI Song # 2647762

Charles Wesley

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**Welcome**

**Prayer of Confession**

Rev Bruce Prewer, Australian Prayers, Christmas Confession.

If we have arrived at a time in our lives  
when the Christmas story no longer excites or renews us:  
***Have mercy upon us, O God.***

If, in the midst of the riches of the gospel,  
of the Word made flesh, we live like paupers:  
***Have mercy upon us, O God.***

If the coming of Jesus fails to challenge us  
and the song of the angels ceases to enthral us:  
***Have mercy upon us, O God.***

If, in the face of the world's great need,  
we hoard the good news like misers:  
***Have mercy upon us, O God.***

(Silent meditation)

So that we may be forgiven and renewed:  
***Restore us to the joy of salvation.***

So that we may be a loving community:  
**Restore us to the joy of salvation.**

So that we may clothe our good intentions with the garments of action:  
**Restore us to the joy of salvation,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen**

### **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:**

Rev Bruce Prewer

It is forever written: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Let this Christmas message be the Word which today absolves you, sets you free, gives you peace, and lifts up your hearts with joy and thanksgiving.  
Amen!

**Song**      TIS 311 Silent Night

1. 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

2. Silent night holy night  
Shepherds quake at the sight  
Glories stream from heaven afar  
Heav'nly hosts sing alleluia  
Christ the Savior is born  
Christ the Savior is born

3. Silent night holy night  
Wondrous star lend thy light  
With the angels let us sing  
Alleluia to our King  
Christ the Savior is born  
Christ the Savior is born

CCLI Song # 5389780

John Freeman Young | Joseph Mohr | Ruth Elaine Schram

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**Reading:** Luke 2:1-20 NRSV

Ian Randall

### **The Birth of Jesus**

**2** In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> 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.

## The Shepherds and the Angels

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> 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: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,<sup>[a]</sup> the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,<sup>[b]</sup> praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>15</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

## Sermon      Share the joy of Christmas

Christmas, what does it mean to you? How do you respond to this busy season? And how has Christmas changed this year due to COVID restrictions?

Not everyone responds to Christmas like we do in the Church. Not many people would consider coming to church early on Christmas morning. To many, Christmas is all about presents, food, drink and holidays.

The Christmas story goes back thousands of years, well before the actual birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem. The prophets spoke about the promised Saviour.

And the story continues on, over two thousand years later as God reaches out into our lives.

The story is about a great cosmic event, a fantastic event in history when God, the God of creation, shows his great love for all mankind. Yet it is done almost secretly, in an obscure corner of the universe, and it occurs to a humble carpenter and a young girl.

There is no fanfare, no great publicity campaign, no television coverage. Even the King did not know what had happened.

God came down in a humble stable at the back of an overcrowded inn. Even the Inn keeper and all the guests had no idea what had happened out the back in the stable.

The baby was born and Mary wrapped him in cloths and placed him in the manger, a feeding trough for the animals.

This is the great birth of the Son on God and saviour of the world!

There is no mention of any of the people in the inn knowing anything about what was happening. It is like Joseph, Mary and Jesus were in a different little world of their own, hidden out the back, unnoticed by anyone else.

## **The welcoming committee**

Now it is time for God to send out for the welcoming committee. He did not call in the local Mayor and local dignitaries, but a motley group of shepherds from out in the fields.

The scene moves to these shepherds quietly going about their daily work, watching the sheep. At first it was dark with a little light from the stars and maybe the moon. Suddenly, the angel appeared before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. Now it was like daylight, and not surprisingly, they were a little afraid!

Here is the news flash! The Angel brings “Good News” to not just them but all people.

What could it be? What great thing has happened? Why is the angel telling these lowly shepherds? Why didn't he tell the great crowds of people in the big cities like Jerusalem?

The angel says that “Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born, he is Christ the Lord”.

The town of David. This meant Bethlehem. A small town 10 kms south of Jerusalem. It was the home of Jesse and his family, and one of his sons was David the shepherd by who was to become king.

While Bethlehem seems insignificant to us, it was quite significant to the Jews.

But what great thing would they find in Bethlehem? A sign! Not a bright neon sign but a newborn baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger.

How would you react to this news? Even though they lived in a different time and culture than us here in 2020, some of this would mean something to them, even though they would still be quite confused and over awed at the sight of angels.

But what happened next would really have their minds boggling! Suddenly, a great number of the heavenly host appeared with the angel and began praising God. This is getting serious!

This was a time for everyone, man and angels to worship God for the great things he has done. And that is why we are here this morning, to worship God and praise him for the great gift of his Son.

The shepherds responded, by going into Bethlehem to see this great thing that has happened.

They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby just as they had been told.

You know, there was probably something special to them finding the baby in a manger in a stable. God came to earth as a baby and he came to a place with animals and away from crowds of people, the sort of place that these shepherds were comfortable and at home. God comes to each of us where ever we are, we don't have to go to God's special; place to meet him.

## **Outreach campaign**

What did they do next? They went back to their sheep and talked all night about what they had seen!

NO! They spread the word concerning what they had been told about this child.

The shepherds were not particularly important in society. They were probably the type of people who were contented with each other's company and did not like crowds or strangers.

Yet, here we see them going out and telling everyone what they had seen and heard. You know, we wish everyone a merry Christmas and we send lots of Christmas cards, emails or phone calls, but do we share our joy and the love of God with them?

Many people really do not know about Mary and the baby, about shepherds, and wise men. There are a lot of people in our society that have never heard the real Christmas story. They have heard carols sung in shopping centres or on the radio, but never really thought about what it is all about.

To them Christmas is about Santa Clause and presents, it is about parties, food and getting drunk, it is about catching up with family and holidays.

It is up to us to tell people what God has done for us and for them in sending his Son to live like us, to experience the emotions and feelings we feel, but to go further and be persecuted, hung on a cross and then rise again for us, so that our sins will be forgiven.

The shepherds had seen and experienced the angels praising God and seeing the tiny baby in the manger, we have experienced much more of the love of God.

Like the shepherds we should go and tell everyone what we have seen and heard.

And the exciting bit, was that everyone who heard were amazed at what the shepherds said to them!

Sometimes we are afraid that people do not want to hear about God things, but we forget that the Holy Spirit is also working in the minds and hearts of those to which we speak.

How do you and I respond to this busy Christmas season?

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God. Let us too glorify and praise God in our daily lives.

**Amen**

**Song - TIS 268 Joy to the World**

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 nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

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.

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

CCLI Song # 2856405

Isaac Watts

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## Announcements

### Offering for the Christmas Bowl

Lectionary Generated Liturgy

Loving God, we give thanks for the work of Act for Peace through the Christmas Bowl. Receive and bless the gifts given on line or in the basket in the hall which we give in response to the greatest gift of all - your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

May our lives and these gifts towards the Christmas Bowl be used to reveal your love in as many ways and to as many people as possible.

This we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen**

### Prayer of Intercession

Lectionary Generated Liturgy

O God, we thank you for the message of love that Christmas brings to a world where hatred and violence is experienced by so many people in so many places. Help us to reveal in our lives the love that Jesus so embodied, the love that Paul wrote about so eloquently - the love that is patient and kind; the love that is never envious or boastful, or arrogant or rude; the love that does not insist on its own way and is not irritable or resentful; that in all things we may put love first.

***O God, we thank you for the message of joy that Christmas brings to a world grown used to suffering. We remember in your presence the hungry and homeless men, women and young people, our brothers and sisters in Christ, who cry out for a word of tenderness, a touch of love, a sign of hope, some practical help;***

We remember also those for whom this season is clouded by loneliness or anxiety or bereavement and especially this year, we remember those who have been separated from loved ones due to the COVID pandemic.

*(a short silence is observed here)*

We pray that they may be kept from bitterness and despair as they remember the birth of him who bore our grief and carried our sorrows, yet who was born at Bethlehem that people might experience life in all its fullness.

O God, we thank you for the message of kindness that Christmas brings to a world grown self-centered and cynical through greed. Help us to remember that Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve. May we all find true joy and fulfilment in giving ourselves in service to others as we remember together the birth of him who came to give himself to us.

O God, we thank you for the message of peace that Christmas brings to our troubled world. Give peace among nations; peace in lands torn apart by warring factions; peace in our homes and in our hearts as we remember the birth at Bethlehem of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

(Adapted from prayers from 'Worship Now': D.Cairns, I Pitt-Watson, J.A.Whyte, T.B. Honeyman, The St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1972)

## 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*

## Song - TIS 322 The North Wind

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 cold stream flows silently by,  
The joybells 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.

## Benediction

Lectionary Generated Liturgy

We have lifted up our voices and sung to the Christ-child the heavenly King  
***We go, rejoicing over this wonderful gift of God, confident in the love of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.***

May the peace of God and the blessings of Christmas go with you.  
***And also with you.***