

Woden Valley Uniting Church



Christmas Day 2024



Jesus practised radical inclusion! All are welcome here.

WE GATHER AS PEOPLE OF GOD

The Gong is struck three times. *The gong calls us to gather, to be present in this time of worship.*

Prelude: *Silent Night*

Acknowledgement of First Peoples.

Light the Community Candle & Advent candles 1,2,3,4

We light these candles, symbols of our community; they are the light that guides us into loving action, into actions that we take even if they are just moments of kindness or tenderness among people... when we do something decent that we don't need to do¹.

Call to Worship in song: *O Come, all ye faithful (v1,6,7)*

**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.**

¹ Adapted from Tim Winton, *The Shepherd's Hut*.

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!

Glory to God
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!

Chorus:

Prayer

When the world was dark
and the city was quiet
you came.
You crept in beside us
And brought us love.
Open eyes and ears and hearts,
that this might just be
a Christmas Day of the greatest possibility
...of love to the world.

Welcome and Introduction

Birthdays are special events and we've come to the most famous one of all. Today we hear an adaptation of Luke's story about the birth of Jesus. We hear the paradoxical story that the King of the Jews who died on Good Friday after a life of loving action, had arrived in the world in a manner befitting his **royal** status: in the humblest shelter, with (undoubtedly) anxious parents and a few animals in attendance.

Christmas Greeting: Let's share the joy of Christmas in greeting one another.

Christmas Candle Lighting: *Choose to Love*

Jesus the Christ, we welcome you as we arrive at the end of our Advent journey. Your gifts to your people are beyond our wildest dreams. Make your home among

us and teach us to be servants to each other and to all in need of hospitality. Your kingdom come today and forever. We light this white candle for **Love**, for the embodiment of God's presence, born this and every day among all people of goodwill.

Jesus Christ we receive you.

Jesus Christ we celebrate you.

Song: *Many the Gifts* (Please remain seated)

**Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come.**

**Christ be our light!
Shine in our hearts,
Shines through the darkness.
Christ be our light!
Shine in your church
Gathered today.**

WE REFLECT ON WORDS FOR OUR TIME

Psalm 96: 11-13

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound, and all that is in it.
Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.
Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes,
he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Reading 1: Mysterious Paradoxes

Lauren Mallaby

Mysterious paradoxes collide in this story.
A story of a baby,
Born into nothing,
Yet born into everything.
Born in a shed,
But born in love,
And is love
And brings love.

The paradox of a young woman,
Not yet wedded,
Blessed to bring life,
Into this world that needs life
Needs hope
Requires love.
She trusted that it was she
Who God entrusted this life
This bundle of love.

How afraid would she have been?
How excited would she have been?
How honoured would she have been?
And so in fact,
She brings love.
In the form of a baby,
Who cries
And nurses,
And brings love.
And the young man,

That carpenter,
Who trusted the voice that said
Love her
Support her
Guide her.
And contrary to anything
And everything
That society said,
He did love her
Support her
Guide her.

The paradox of working men,
Shepherds,
Out in a field,
All alone,
Yet not alone.
Glorious glowing friends,
Speaking of good news –
Lord knows we need good news.
Good news of hope
And peace
And joy

And love.
They needed to see this:
Good news of hope
And peace
And joy
And love

They trusted, these strangers in the night,
And travelled,
Travelled to see the infant,
Born into nothing,
And yet everything.
This baby born into a world that was theirs.
A world that they knew,
They understood.
Not of wondrous gold
And glittery diamonds,
But a world of smelly animals,
And feed troughs.
A world that was their own.

This beautiful paradoxical mystery,
Where two thousand years ago
This baby was born.
This baby who brought light
And life
And hope
And peace,
And yet – today,
This baby is born again.
We have to trust like Mary
Trust that today it is us
Who are blessed to bring
Love.

And trust that as Jesus is born today,
God entrusts this life
This bundle,
This love
To us.
Have faith like the carpenter Joseph,
That we are guided to
Love all,
Support all,

Guide all,
And contrary to anything
And everything
That society says,
We must
Guide all, support all, love all.

Response: When we choose to love, we know that God is near.

Song: *Once in Royal David's City*

1. **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 that little child.**
2. **And through all his wondrous
childhood,
Day by day, like us, he grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us, he knew;
And he feels for all our sadness,
And he shares in all our gladness**
3. **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 and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour Holy.**

Reading 2: Isaiah 9: 6-7

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.
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.

Response: When we choose to love, we know that God is near

Song: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

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 th’ angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th’ incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

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 lays his glory by,
born that man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”

Reading 3: I am the Newborn (As a child enters the world)

As I enter my new family,
May they be delighted
At how their kindness
Comes into blossom.
Unknown to me and them,
May I be exactly the one
To restore in their forlorn places

New vitality and promise.
May the hearts of others
Hear again the music
In the lost echoes
Of their neglected wonder.
If my destiny is sheltered,
May the grace of this privilege
Reach and bless the other infants
Who are destined for torn places.
If my destiny is bleak,
May I find in myself
A secret stillness
And tranquillity
Beneath the turmoil.
May my eyes never lose sight
Of why I have come here,
That I never be claimed
By the falsity of fear
Or eat the bread of bitterness.
In everything I do, think,
Feel, and say,
May I allow the light
Of the world I am leaving
To shine through and carry me home. *John O'Donohue*
Response: When we choose to love, we know that God is near.

Reflection for Christmas Day

Music for Reflection *Oh, Holy Night*

WE RESPOND TO THE WORD

Song: *Carol of the Birds*

**Out on the plains the brolgas are dancing
Lifting their feet like war horses prancing
Up to the sun the woodlarks go winging
Faint in the dawn light echoes their singing
Orana! Orana! Orana to Christmas Day!**

**Down where the tree ferns grow by the river
There where the waters sparkle and quiver
Deep in the gullies bellbirds are chiming
Softly and sweetly their lyric notes rhyming
Orana! Orana! Orana to Christmas Day!**

**High in the trees the thornbills are calling
Moving through leaves, the woodswallows soaring
Gang gangs are creaking, cockatoos squawking
Fairy wrens waking and praising the morning
Orana! Orana! Orana to Christmas Day!**

**Friar birds sip the nectar of flowers
Currawongs chant in wattle tree bowers
In the blue ranges lorikeets calling
Carols of bushbirds rising and falling
Orana! Orana! Orana to Christmas Day!**

Offering

Our Offering today is for the Christmas Bowl, for projects of love in action, that have been spoken about through Advent (envelopes at door).

Prayers of the People & Community Candle

It has been a tradition from SWUC days that we gather pieces of wax today...they will become the new CC to be lit at Easter. The pieces remind us of all in our congregation and those dear to us who have passed.

In community we pray:

- That peace comes to Europe, the Middle East, Africa and all nations
- That the beauty of this earth is protected, healed and held for the enjoyment of future generations
- That every Australian receives equal dignity, respect and opportunity
- That in our local community there are safe homes for all, places of refuge, free from violence, places that nurture, encouraging people to flourish
- That on this beautiful Christmas day we pray that those who need a tender touch may find You, so that they will know the true meaning of love and sharing and the Christmas promise of hope.

Response: So that they will know the true meaning of love and sharing

**Great divine spirit of love that is at the core of everything
And from whom all life flows,
We acknowledge your healing and transforming power.
May the spirit of unconditional love and forgiveness flow through each of us
and enable the realm of love to spread throughout the world.
Like the flowers in the fields, ensure that we have the basics we need to live
And give us the love and commitment to ensure that others have what they
need.
Give us the courage to acknowledge when we have done wrong,
to seek forgiveness from those we have hurt
and to forgive those who have hurt us,
so that we may be reconciled.
We acknowledge the power of self-giving love to transform individual hearts
and the world.
We recommit ourselves to the unconditional love of others and the work of
peace and justice. Amen.**

WE GO OUT INTO THE WORLD

Words of Mission

We have lit candles this Christmas;
Candles of joy despite all sadness;
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage for fears ever present;
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all our living,
Candles that will burn all year long.

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
**To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.**

Song: Top of the World

Carpenters

Such a feeling's coming over me
There is wonder in 'most everything I see
Not a cloud in the sky, got the sun in my eyes
And I won't be surprised if it's a dream
Everything I want the world to be
Is now coming true especially for me
And the reason is clear, it's because you are here
You're the nearest thing to heaven that I've seen

I'm on the top of the world looking down on creation
And the only explanation I can find
Is the love that I've found ever since you've been around
Your love's put me at the top of the world

Something in the wind has learned my name
And it's telling me that things are not the same
In the leaves on the trees and the touch of the breeze
There's a pleasing sense of happiness for me
There is only one wish on my mind
When this day is through I hope that I will find
That tomorrow will be just the same for you and me
All I need will be mine if you are here

I'm on the top of the world looking down on creation
And the only explanation I can find
Is the love that I've found ever since you've been around
Your love's put me at the top of the world

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Postlude: Joy to the World

Acknowledgements

Tim Winton, *The Shepherd's Hut*; <https://revgalblogpals.blogspot.com/2007/12/when-world-was-dark.html>; Mysterious Paradoxes, a Christmas reflection — Lauren Mallaby, Australia accessed at <https://worshipwords.co.uk/mysterious-paradoxes-a-christmas-reflection-lauren-mallaby-australia/>; John O'Donohue (*To Bless the Space Between Us*); *Christ Be Our Light* by Bernadette Farrell at <https://lyricsrc.com/lyrics/bernadette-farrell-christ-be-our-light>; "Top of the World Sheet Music." *Lyrics.com*. STANDS4 LLC, 2024. Web. 12 Dec. 2024. <<https://www.lyrics.com/sheetmusic.php?id=35343699>>.