

**Whitehorse Uniting Church
Monday 25 December 2023
Christmas Day A**



Introit – 303 O Come, all ye faithful.

<https://youtu.be/Q8dgl4-bVPU?si=eQiUepJ5Xcbk11fm>

Welcome

May you and your family be blessed this Christmas.

Call worship (Psalm 96:1-2 adapted)

O sing to the Lord a new song

Sing to the Lord, sing to the Lord a new song.

Sing to the Lord a new song.

Sing of the Lord's glory, for the Lord God is great.

Carol - And did you see him, little star (sung by choir)

Helen Diana Clyde 1889-1983

And did you see him, little star, long, long ago?
And was it you, I wonder, shone on manger low?
And did you see the shepherd men, when angels sang?
'Peace on earth, good will to all,' the message rang.

And did you guide the three wise kings, with shining light?
And bring them to the holy child, on that great night?
And will you still shine down on earth.

Prayer – Light to our people

Lord Jesus, we thank you,
that when the world was very dark,
you came, to bring light into our darkness.
You came in the night, to bring light into the lives of Mary and Joseph.

You came to Bethlehem -
then, as now, a very troubled town - bringing light to all who came to trust you.

You come to us now,
into our lives and into our world,
bringing light still to your people.

We ask you now, once again,
to accept this worship that we bring
as we come again to the manger.

Help us to see there,
the light that will shine for us, not just at Christmas, but every day of the year.

John Harvey – Hay and Stardust (Edit. Ruth Burgess) Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. www.ionabooks.com Used with permission.



Hymn - O little town of Bethlehem

Relaxing Piano moments 2023

<https://youtu.be/nhYLNLSLu2XQ?si=7URzAG0G2YFmQGmC>

Reading - Isaiah 9:2-7 NRSVUE.

²[a]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. ³You have multiplied exultation; [b]—you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Great will be his authority, [c] and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

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Hymn 302 The Angel Gabriel

All Angels 2009

<https://youtu.be/yHuokdjT4UY?si=QA8UjJnNuztq5Egr>

Gospel Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered.

⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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. [a]

⁸Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, [b] the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, [c] praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” [d] ¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, ¹⁹and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying, and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

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Carol - Hark the herald angels.

Kings College Choir 2022

<https://youtu.be/9Bwn0k0k8xl?si=dbxAypvMyVurywVr>

Christmas Reflection - Sing a new song for the Lord – Rev Tina



This time of year, the expectation is we're going to be all together with our families on Christmas day, and everyone is going to get on wonderfully. We're going to feel joy and put aside everything that's happened all year.

Some families find this challenging. There may be family members who are not speaking to one another and a need for separate Christmas lunches and dinners. It's not easy to put aside broken relationships and mend them, just for one day a year.

Other families may be separated by distance and need to drive from one meal in Melbourne to another in a faraway country town or do WhatsApp or Zoom with family living overseas. I remember when my son lived in Japan in his twenties and we sent over a box of Christmas decorations, food and presents and a tape of us singing carols and with greetings. People get homesick when they are separated from their families at Christmas. Our hearts may ache at Christmas time when we are separated from our loved ones.

There may be members of our congregation who are spending today alone. They may have celebrated Christmas on Christmas Eve with family or will celebrate Christmas tomorrow, on Boxing Day. If you know of any of our members who are watching the Christmas service online, be an online buddy and give them a ring after the service and wish them Merry Christmas. It doesn't matter if we double up, just reach out and take the initiative and ring someone or drop off a Christmas surprise like shortbread or a slice of cake or Christmas Decoration.

Christmas can also be a time when a family member is unwell or dying or experiencing grief. How can they be expected to pretend to be joyful when the rest of the year has been filled with sadness or its their first Christmas without a loved one, or last Christmas with a loved one.

Christmas is not the time to pretend. It's the time to be real. Real about our need to receive love from others and to give love to others.

Christmas is not about being perfect or having it all together. It's about accepting our humanity, warts and all and our need for one another. The greatest gifts we can give to others is our time and our love.

It's a gift to accept another, warts, and all. It's a gift to let go of grudges and make our peace. It's a gift to listen to one another's story and try to understand each other.



Leunig – used with permission.

This is one of Leunig's cartoons. A journalist is interviewing God, asking God, 'Who are your chosen people?'

This brings to mind a bible passage from 1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,^[a] in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people;

This reading goes well with today's reading from Isaiah 9.

² 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.

That light is Jesus who has filled each one of us with the light of the Spirit of God.

Who are God's people?

In Leunig's cartoon it's Sheryl and Bert. Why? Because they are a good old couple, and God likes them. They're not perfect, they have their ups and downs and being the favourite doesn't give them special privileges. God likes them simply because they're genuine, humble, and kind of sweet.

Tomorrow Bill and Marg might be God's favourites. Today's it's all of us. We have a lot in common with Sheryl and Bert.

The cartoon was on Facebook, so I checked out comments in response to it. These are some of them.

Sharon said, 'I like this God.'

Brian said, 'I think all of us are equal to God and no one is chosen as better or more important than others. Thou he has saved my bacon on a number of occasions. God knows why! But I'm humbly grateful.'

Lao said, *'You could be picked for next week.'*

Christmas Day reminds us God chose all of us and chose to be incarnated amongst us. It wasn't a perfect choice for God. Herod tried to kill Jesus as a baby, and Jesus ended up crucified on a cross. Yet there were moments of intense joy in Jesus' life, profound healings and teachings, women supported his ministry with service and money, and his disciples were close friends. There were many contrasts, ups and downs, in his life. What stands out is Jesus' acceptance of people, warts, and all.

There weren't any royal oracles for Jesus in the same way as for King Hezekiah, as in Isaiah 9, although the words have been used to describe the identity of Jesus.



Instead, Jesus came amongst us in a rough and ready way. He lay in a feed trough, in a stable, with a young mum and Joseph willing to accept him as his own son. The first witnesses of his birth were humble men, shepherds, at the bottom of the social ladder. Shepherds who witnessed messengers from God, angels, singing a wonderful song of praise to God. The sign from God for them, was a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. How ordinary. Yet, the ordinary has become extraordinary, for us. Because of God's incarnation amongst us, a great light has shined, not in a comet or star but in Jesus, the morning star who rises in our lives and brings

hope and peace to our souls. God has come amongst us, and we no longer walk in darkness.

Mary treasured all of this and pondered about it in her heart. So do we and in many ways, it's become part of our spiritual journey and identity.

Our recent advent study was about community, belonging, acceptance and trust. We trust each other like God trusted us with himself. We come together with a common goal and longing.

One of the movies in the advent study, *Fishermen's Friends*, had a moment when a man was angry about a young man selling the pub, which he considered as the heart of the community. A woman spoke up and said, *'The heart of the community is not the pub, it's the people.'* We might say the same, *'The heart of the community is not the church building's, it's the people.'* It's been a challenging year, but a rewarding year, as we've come together as one community in Christ and journeyed together.

I wonder what speaks to us today from our Christmas readings. Perhaps it's the first two verses of the psalm, *'Sing a new song for the Lord.'* Today's service is a feast of music, where the choir is blessing us. Music blesses us. It changes our mood and can lift up our spirits. Music helps us feel joy, even in the midst of challenge and hardship. Music can carry us through the dark valleys of life and can help us rejoice when we feel blessed. Music has carried us through this year, and it will carry us through next year.

The ABC App had a story about a boatie named Gavin and a pilot named Magoo. The gist of the story is Gavin and Magoo rescued 18 people stranded in trees and on the roof of a pub in far north Queensland after cyclone Jasper moved through the area. Magoo apparently flew a mustering helicopter, a single one engine chopper with two seats and rescued 16 people one by one, by landing on the roof of the Lion's Den Hotel, sixteen times. Gavin and Magoo witnessed to the kind of love that exists within communities, that can carry people through the worst possible situations and witness to God's love amongst us.

Each one of us is at the heart of our community in Christ. What song will you sing his Christmas that will give others hope for the future and strong hearts? What song do you long to hear sung to you?

May you and your family have a blessed and peaceful Christmas, amen.



Carol – Poverty

Hyde Park Community United Methodist Church Choir Cincinnati Ohio
(Extra 304 2010)

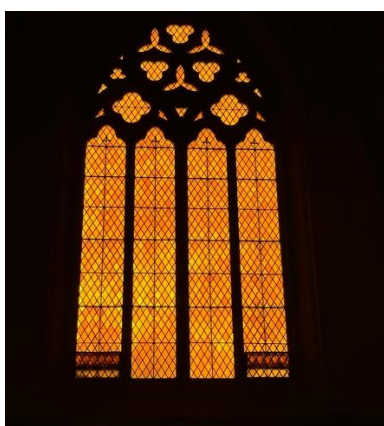
<https://youtu.be/7Jg2CRfO9xl?si=caQPlwYooBGAvVZ>

Offering prayer – Rev Tina

This Christmas we offer up ourselves to you Lord,
Giving thanks for your constant love for us, amen

Candle prayers

You may like to light a candle and pray.



Coventry Carol

Aruna-Systin -m'anam 2016 Arr. Michael McGlynn

<https://youtu.be/Wit-jGD4wCw?si=DL73PA-vfaCf87wl>

Prayers of the People

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Lord Jesus,
You are the light of the world.
Shine in dark places
where there are wars and where people hurt each other.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
you are the light of the world.
help our leaders, to know how to run this country and this city,
so that everybody's needs are met, especially those who are suffering.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
you are the light of the world,
shine in dark places, where people are ill or sad.
Please bring help and healing.
Lord Jesus,
we are your lights in the world.

Help us to be prepared,
to show people your light by loving them.
Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
we are your lights in the world.
Help us to be prepared,
to put the needs of others, before our needs, for your sake.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus
we are your lights in the world.
Help us to be prepared,
to look out for you, so we can follow you in everything we do.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

Celebrations

We wish you and your family a Merry Christmas.

Sending out

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Light of God
Lead us.

Power of God
Hold us.

Joy of God
Heal us.

Laughter of God
Bless us.

Love of God
Caress us.

Carol - Joy to the world

Flash Mob 2014 Calvary Choir, Roseville

https://youtu.be/qwpkKT2gH8I?si=0Jih9fc_cpFMxrHB

Some YouTube Christmas Music

Angels from the Realms of Glory

The Piano Guys 2014

https://youtu.be/PrLoWt2tfqg?si=zMHlcyh_6qt6Zq1q

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

The Piano Guys 2012

<https://youtu.be/iO7ySn-Swwc?si=jY-o9oczWQbTzpiB>



“Carol of the bells” Shepherd Boomwhaker style (Hope you find this amusing)

(BW Porter 2017) KCC Worship Arts for Christmas Services at Kentwood Community Church Grand Rapids Michigan

https://youtu.be/uBhrMThGnVQ?si=j1OrdZD59MX_h7xz

Mary did you know?

Logan Institute of Singers 2017

https://youtu.be/CihO7vA_ps4?si=E4pk3olFmOgc03_9

Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina



Imagine standing in a field of sunflowers or canola, where the flowers have their happy faces turned towards the sunshine and bees are buzzing and butterflies are everywhere. This is the time of year when we face long sunny days, and most people want to relax and be lazy. It's a sabbath time of year and people tend to avoid meetings and commitments, and they practice the fine art of doing nothing. In fact, God recommends this in the creation story, which we

are part of, so take a sabbath time during January.

Summer offers up long lazy days where we can find a quiet place to read a book or listen to music or take time out in the garden or at the beach. All of us prize our freedom. This is the time to claim it and cherish it, so nature can nurture us for the new year's challenges.

We need space, rest, and quality time with family. A fallow time away from the messiness and business of life, whatever shape that may take. This is not just for those who are employed, working and have holidays this time of year. Some people are busier, after they retire. We need to start saying no at this time of the year, without feeling guilty.



Receiving what's life-giving makes us more able to be generous with ourselves and give to others in ways that empower others. Caring for and loving ourselves helps us be blessed and a blessing for others and the world.