



Christmas Eve, December 24th, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Notes & Preparation for the meditation: *Create a calm, sacred gathering space with dimmed lights, soft instrumental Christmas music, and a simple nativity scene at the front. Offer each person an LED tealight candle or glow stick to hold during the meditation.*

If using more than two voices offer each reader one segment in numbered order. Have the readers speak the italicised verse of scripture before pausing then offering the meditation.

Print the communal response on a large piece of paper or have it available as a PowerPoint slide.

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Are you ready?

Ready for the celebration, ready for the legends,
ready for the wandering star,
the angel voices, the shepherds in awe?

This is a night of history,
a night of memory,
a night of anticipation and hope.

Let's all get ready,
let's gather together
in joy and hope and peace and love,
let's get ready for the baby
born in wonder and holiness.

Let's worship God.

*Light the advent candles
- hope, peace, joy, love*

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded land and waters. We pay respect to Elders past and present. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit

ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing - O come, all ye faithful TiS 304 **(verses 1,2,3,5 & 6)**

OR: The first nowell TiS 301



Prayer

We are here to be part of your big story loving God. We have heard this story so often, of the child who calls to the children in and of us all. The one who demonstrates total and unabashed love for us and the whole of the world.

Through you we find our hope and our future. We adore you and want to be the best that we can be.

And yet Lord, when we take this time to reflect on who we are, we know that we are so often unable to participate fully in love. Instead, our lives are cluttered with those things that do not represent hope, joy, peace and love.

We are sceptical that these things will take place, we are diverted by our own mistakes, our own timidity, our own fears, our own sense of defeat.

Forgive us Lord, let your coming, as an infant, in a stable, surrounded by people like us remind us that hope comes in new beginnings. Let the flowering of your spirit capture us in your redemptive presence and the light of your star shine us on tonight.

Assurance:

Hear then the words that should make us leap with joy. Through Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Friends of the Fig Tree, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.



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Listening and Reflecting

- Rev. Amanda Nicholas

A Christmas Eve Meditation for 2 or more voices based on Luke 2:1-14, (15-20),

Opening: Begin with the congregation seated. Invite everyone, young and old, to close their eyes for a moment and breathe deeply.

The Meditation

1. Voice 1 (Calm, Reflective Tone):

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled.

Imagine the world moving, restless and busy, like the streets of a city—people walking, carts rolling, voices buzzing. Feel the hum of activity all around you. But in the middle of all that motion, picture one young couple, traveling slowly. A woman, weary but hopeful. A man concerned but steady.

Can you see them? Their journey feels small, but heaven is leaning close.

2. Voice 2 (Gentle, Guiding Tone):

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to David's city, which is called Bethlehem...

Now imagine Bethlehem. A tiny town, wrapped in quiet. Small lights flicker in the windows. The stars shine bright above. Smell the earthy scent of hay and animals. Hear the muffled sounds of sheep and oxen. Look closer. There—under the stars—is a stable. And inside, a young woman is holding her newborn baby.

What does her face look like? Is it tired? Joyful? Both?

(Pause for Silent Reflection)

3. Voice 1 (Softer, Reverent):

She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

This isn't a grand palace or a mighty temple. It's simple. Humble. Yet, something holy fills the air. The stable seems to glow from within. What do you feel as you look at this scene?

4. Voice 2 (Excited, Awe-Filled):

There were shepherds in the same country staying in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. Behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

Now turn your eyes to the hillside. Shepherds, wrapped in cloaks, huddle near their sheep. The night is dark, the stars distant. Suddenly, the sky bursts open with radiant light! Imagine the brightness, the shimmer of angel wings, the sound of heavenly voices.

What would it be like to stand there? To hear the words: "Don't be afraid! For behold, I bring you good news of great joy..."

5. Communal Response (Softly Together):

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward humankind."

6. Voice 1 (Inviting, Warm):

The shepherds didn't stay in the fields. They hurried to find the child, just as the angel had said.

Imagine yourself walking with them, your heart racing, your steps quickening. You arrive and kneel before the manger.

What do you offer to this newborn King? What hope? What prayer?

7. Voice 2 (Reflective):

Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.

As we sit here tonight, let us do the same. Like Mary, let us hold this story in our hearts. Like the shepherds, let us carry this joy out into the world.



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8. Closing (Lights Gradually Brighten):

Invite everyone to lift their LED candles or glow sticks. As the room brightens with the collective glow, remind them that the light of Christ is alive in each of us, and we are called to share it with the world.

Singing - Silent night TiS 311

OR: Away in a manger TiS 318 (with some new words)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

An innocent stranger, this boy-child so near
brings blessing to those who are living in fear,
brings hope to the weary and love's burning light
to all who are lost or afraid in the night.

From here at the manger, we ask you to stay
close by us as we try to walk in your way;
confronting the powers and growing in grace
as those who most need you, come bearing your face.

Let us, who have plenty, give those who have less;
an offer of shelter, a friendship to bless,
asylum for refugees, food for the poor,
shared tables of comfort and wide-open doors.

From manger to marketplace, Jesus come near
and whisper your wonder to our waiting ears.
Bring healing and freedom, bring hope and release
so all of creation can breathe in your peace.

Words: Jennie Gordon

Offering

*You may want to have an offering for the work of
Act for Peace - The Christmas Bowl Appeal.*
<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au>

Surprising God, on this holy night as we anticipate
the joy of your coming to us in a baby, born of
Mary, we ask your blessing on these gifts we
bring. May they be signs of hope for children,
mothers and all those who need a glimpse of
glory and a safe place to stay. Amen.

Prayers for World & Community

Lord may your peace reign amongst us.
We pray that in this time of thanksgiving and joy
that we may be sensitive to those around us.

We know that at this time, there are those who
cannot find peace or joy in your spirit. Instead,
they may be in the shadow of death, war and
grief. They may be longing for light in darkness
that never seems to end. Lord, let your story
break into their lives. Through a moment of
respite, a kind hand, a kind word, a gesture of
peace.

May the common experience of love and
connection be available to each person at this
time.

And let us Lord, be the continuing messengers of
this hope beyond bitterness, peace beyond
conflict, joy beyond despair and love beyond all
things.

Let us be the good news in this season, we pray
this in the name of the one who comes as a baby.
Amen.

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

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 forever. Amen.

Singing - Born in the night TiS 323

OR: While shepherds watched TiS 299



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Blessing

And may the joy and anticipation of Christmas
draw you in
and be the greatest gift you receive this night.

May your ways be clear, your stories be bold,
and your love be shown in the world.
In the name of the Creator, the Redeemer
and the Sustainer. Amen.

Reflection: Rev. Amanda Nicholas
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