



Christmas Day, December 25th, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource



Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

In the beginning was the Word,
the light of life
that darkness cannot overcome.

**The light shines among us,
inviting all to see and believe.**

Come, let us worship the One
who brings life and light.

**With hearts open,
we welcome his grace and truth.**

*Light the advent candles
and the central Christ candle.*

Come, let's walk. *based on Isaiah 2:5*

words: Jennie Gordon © 2019

tune: Twinkle, twinkle, little star

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!

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional
Custodians of these unceded lands 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 - Joy to the World, Tis 268

OR: O come, all ye faithful Tis 304 Verses 1,2,3, 6 & 7

Prayer

Eternal Word, source of all that is,
you are the light that guides our way,
the life that fills our souls with hope.
We adore you, full of grace and truth,
dwelling among us, showing us love.
Yet, O God, we confess:
too often, we turn from your light,
failing to see, to understand,
rejecting the grace you freely give.

Forgive us, O Light of the World.
Shine in our hearts again,
that we may walk in Your ways.
Amen.

Words of Grace:

Today let us hear the good news anew,
as though for the first time:
The Word became flesh and lived among us,
full of grace and truth.
Through him, we are forgiven, renewed,
and made whole.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Passing the peace

May the peace of God
that comes near to us
in the child in the manger,
dwell with you:
and also with you.

Listening

Read: Isaiah 52:7-10

John 1:1-14

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word
Thanks be to God.



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Reflecting - Rev. Heather den Houting

What if God were one of us.....

And so here we are today – this beautiful time of coming together in joy and celebration. It's Christmas time and we gather today in our family and friendship groups to connect with each other and remember in community these powerful messages of Christianity that we know to be true.

We remember the wonder. The incarnation – where we rejoice because we believe that God loves us so much that the *logos*, the Word, was sent to be one of us. That God's promises of redemption continue in the world, not apart from it. This is Christmas.

We remember new beginnings – a child in a manger. The Word coming as a human baby represents the extraordinary humility of this act. Our expectations of might and power are upended by the powerful symbols of the nativity story, and instead the reading from John explains the true nature of God's act. This is Christmas.

We remember the generosity of this gift. Isaiah reminds us that the invitation of God to participate in this wonder and joy, is to all people. The prophet tells us that all the broken-down places would be caught up in the redemptive work of God. This is Christmas.

We remember the graciousness and spaciousness of God. The expansive reach of God through John's introduction is recognized in a vision of splendid salvation. Space and time are irrelevant, this message is universal for all times and all places. This is Christmas.

We remember the exuberance of the readings we hear today. Virtuoso poetry abounds as we are caught again in the renewing story of God. God is relentless in creativity and we are all participants. Life and light are here now, today, with us all. This is Christmas.

We remember how we can participate in this new creation. From the beginning, it was the innkeeper and the shepherds who were witnesses to this cosmic event. It was the ordinary, everyday folk of the world that participated in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. People, just like us, called to be servants of joy. If we understand that God comes without pretension, without nonsense, then we might see that every moment is a Holy moment, and we might see, this is Christmas.

I remember a song from the 80's which I think is one of our best contemporary Christmas carols. It's called One of Us and was sung by Joan Osborne. It is however much to my disappointment that not many people agree with me that it's a Christmas carol and so you won't hear it sung in too many places at this time of year. The chorus goes:

"What if God was one of us? Just like a slob like one of us? Just a stranger on the bus, tryin' to make His way home."

It's a carol because the joyful reality of incarnation, the thing to remember at Christmas, the absolute crux of the matter is that God IS and WAS and is YET to be, one of us. Hallelujah.

And so, the one who we remember on this joyful day, is the One who remembers us and reminds us at all times and in all places that we are so loved that God pitched a tent with us and continually offers us a glowing light so that we might see the way. Amen.

Singing - Infant Holy, Infant Lowly, TiS 292

OR: Love came down at Christmas TiS 317

Offering

Through him, all things came into being,
and in him, we are called children of God.
In gratitude for this great gift,
we offer our lives, our resources, and our hearts.



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May all that we give testify to God's light
and bless the world God loves. Amen.

Notices

*You might want to dedicate the offering
collected today to the Act for Peace,
Christmas Bowl Appeal. There is some
information available here :*

<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources>

Prayers for World & Community

God of light, hear our prayers
for the world you created.
Where darkness seeks to divide,
shine your truth, bringing peace and unity.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who wander in shadow,
facing pain, grief, or doubt,
be their light and their hope.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For your church, called to testify,
give us courage to shine your light,
proclaiming grace and truth in word and deed.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

**INTERCESSORY PRAYERS from the Act for Peace
Christmas Bowl Resources 2024**

<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources>

We bring our thanksgiving
for 75 years of the Christmas Bowl
and the vision of Frank Byatt
that continues to be lived out.

Love is born, Love is always born

For Jane in Zimbabwe
and for the hope that she now has
and for all those touched
through the work of the Christmas Bowl
and for our own giving.

Love is born, Love is always born

For all refugees
and those displaced by disasters and conflicts.
May there be peace
with justice and healing for all who suffer.

Love is born, Love is always born

For families and people
for whom Christmas is not an easy time
and particularly those
grieving the absence of a loved one
or estranged from family.

Love is born, Love is always born

For the witness and unity of Christian
communities to the joyous birth of Jesus Christ
and the people who form the communities.

Love is born, Love is always born

For the healing of the earth,
the care of creation
and an end to climate neglect.

Love is born, Love is always born

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 - Hark the herald angels sing **Tis 303**

OR: Angels from the realms of glory Tis 308



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OR: Away in a manger - *with these 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

Blessing

Go now, as children of the light,
carrying the grace and truth
of the Word made flesh.
May the light of Christ shine in your hearts,
his peace guide your steps,
his glory be proclaimed from your lips,
and his love fill your days, now and always.

Amen.

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