



**Christmas Eve, December 24th, 2025**

**The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

*This is the time to sing carols and celebrate. Welcome visitors, make space for children. If it's a late-night gathering, light the Christ candle just after midnight. If you can, find a soloist to sing 'O Holy night'.*

## **Call to worship & Lighting the Candles**

Here we are!

Gathered in the Advent waiting room.

Longing for a sign.

Searching for a whisper of wonder.

Straining to hear a newborn cry.

Come, Jesus, come, already and not yet, into our world, into our hearts.

And all the people say: **Amen**

We light the candle of hope

We light the candle of peace

We light the candle of joy

We light the candle of love



*There's a candle-lighting song here you can use each week to the tune DIX Tis 314 "As with gladness":*

['Light a Candle Bright and Tall' A Hymn for Advent | Singing the Sacred](#)

## **Acknowledging**



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress*

The Ancient of Days breathed life into this land and her peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the (*please name the people on whose land you gather*) People, the Traditional Custodians, have blessed this place through their law and customs, their care and life. We pay respects to their Elders and leaders past and present, and pray for the future of their communities. May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

## **Singing - O come all ye faithful Tis 304**

**You might choose to sing only verses 1,2,3, 5 & 6**

OR: Angels from the realms of glory Tis 309

## **Prayer**



The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. *Isaiah 9:2*

Thank you God for coming to us, vulnerable and messy, and showing us love and bringing us hope and startling us with glory.

**Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill among people.**

Thank you for reaching out to us and teaching us how to live with kindness, and with open hearts and healing hands.

**Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill among people.**

Thank you, that you love us, no matter where we've been, or who we are or what we've done, or not done. Your great embrace includes us all!

**Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill among people.**

In the quiet, we bring to you the things that sit heavy on our hearts. Forgive us, and help us to accept your peace and your gift of release.

(time of quiet)



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Siblings, know this,  
that God's love is bigger  
than anything we can imagine.  
This love was born, fragile and foreign  
to a world that wasn't ready  
and may never be.

But here and now, this love can bring peace.  
We are forgiven, set free:

The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.      *Isaiah 9:2*

**Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace,  
goodwill among people.**

### ***Passing the peace***

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

### ***Listening***

Read: *Isaiah 9: 2 - 7*  
*Luke 2: 1 – 14*

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

### ***Reflecting - Rev. Heather den Houting***

Tonight, I'm thinking about the shepherds and how much we know about sheep grazing in the Middle East at this time. Not much I suspect, so I wonder whether we might be prepared to reimagine this story in an Australian context.

We remember in the Christmas story that it was a time of dislocation. Under the rule of Rome, the inhabitants of this contested land were under instructions to move. It was arduous for the poor and not at all safe. The shepherd's story is

therefore not a peaceful scene in a peaceful country. Rather being on watch during the night illustrates the ordinary hardship of the life at the time, which included tribal and political conflict, drought, famine and predators.

In Australia we have our own significant stories to share around sheep. From the wealth we gained by "riding on the sheep's back" to the current large pastoral holdings across the continent, still subject to drought and flood. We too can narrate stories of contested land, people in violent conflict with each other, drought and dust, starvation and predators.

So, let's imagine instead three drovers who are doing the hard slog. Drowsing was a tough, nomadic life involving expert horsemanship, navigation, and survival skills. They certainly needed to keep the flock together to maintain their livelihood, and nightfall would mean being alert to danger. The horses are hobbled, the dogs are fed, the drovers have recounted the events of the day and are making plans for the next. They are tired, and they are gathered around a campfire.

Into this scene, comes a terrifying visitation. They are absolutely petrified at an overwhelming and frightening spectacle. The soft glow of campfire against the trees is replaced by a light so bright that it seems that day has arrived. Dogs barking, horses startled, sheep moving in mobs seeking shelter. Nobody is asleep, nobody is at peace.

Into this frantic blinding light that has replaced the night comes the message:

*Do not be afraid. You are receiving good news from God. Rejoice - your liberation is at hand. The world will be saved by the Messiah. The sign of this is a baby in a manger nearby. Glory be to God. Peace to all.*

In this place, we struggle to comprehend this outstanding message made in power, given to the powerless, about the vulnerability of God. The yearning that we all have for a transformed life is answered by the mundane. These dusty overwhelmed drovers, stop their plans, put aside



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their fear and instead seek out a child born to a dispossessed family. The sheep are gathered again, but the journey is different.

The prophetic message in this story is that from the most vulnerable of things, the world can be transformed. The most unredeemed people and circumstances can be messengers of justice, righteousness, hope, peace, joy and love. That this promise is available to us at all times, in all places and all circumstances. In the places of war and dispossession, in the long paddock, in the troubled streets of our cities and towns, in the grieving of the lost and broken.

Do not be afraid, your redeemer is here and near to you. In the quiet glow of the campfire, know that God is with us.

### ***Singing - While Shepherds watched*** **TiS 299**

OR: **Beside a billabong**

*Written by Jennie Gordon – Re-write of a song I wrote for Advent Workshop in 1996 at Montrose Uniting Church.*

*Sung to the tune of **WALTZING MATILDA** (attributed to Christina Macpherson, from a Scottish folk tune)*

Sheep in a paddock, a drover watching over them,  
angels in the sky shouting, 'don't be afraid,  
we've got some news, the fulfillment of a prophecy,  
a wond'rous little ba-by, born on Christmas Day'

*If you want to see him, if you want to see him,  
if you want to see him, hurry, don't be long.  
He's with his mother Mary,  
and Joseph and the wallabies  
down along the creek and beside a billabong.*

This story comes from long ago, in Bethlehem,  
shepherds, and angels, beneath their starry sky,  
but God's love's for all of us,  
ev'ry time and ev'ry place,  
God's gift of love in a ba-by's cry.

*If you want to see him, if you want to see him,  
if you want to see him, hurry, don't be long.  
He's with his mother Mary,  
and Joseph and the wallabies  
down along the creek and beside a billabong.*

### ***Offering***

*You may choose to donate the giving from this service and the one on Christmas Day to the Act for Peace Christmas Bowl Appeal.*

Thank you, God of all, for the gift of Jesus, who taught us how to live in love. Bless these gifts we bring and use them, and use us, to bring hope and healing where it is needed, in the name of the Holy Child, Jesus the Christ, Amen.

### ***Prayers for World & Community***

*Have a tray of sand and some taper candles for people to place around a central candle. Play a carol, or some reflective music. Allow time ...*

You are invited to come and light a candle:  
in remembrance,  
in gratitude,  
in hope, for peace.

You may wish to say something aloud;  
a name, a place, a situation.  
Please remember to respect  
the confidentiality and privacy of others.

Come and offer your prayers  
and at the end  
I invite you to pray the Lord's Prayer together  
in the language of your heart...

### ***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 - Silent night TiS 311***

OR: Hark! The herald angels sing TiS 303



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## ***Blessing***

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Go in peace, knowing that now and always  
love will be born, strange and surprising,  
vulnerable and powerful,  
breathtaking, like stars in the night sky,  
mesmerising, like a campfire,  
welcoming, like a feasting table.

May the child we celebrate now,  
be born in you, and visible in many ways,  
through all your days.

**May it be so, Amen!**

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