

Chatter, eating, and laughter all blending
with fond memories of other years:
The personal, spiritual, and secular
poured together into one incarnational celebration.

It's Christmas season again in this lucky country
Christ's birthday awaited under evening skies.

Dear God, what a holy day tomorrow will be!
What a celebration of life and love!
With the whole church on earth and in heaven,
we join in the angels' song:
'Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, goodwill toward all people'.

Let's stay seated to sing together
The North Wind is tossing the leaves (322 TIS)

John reminds us:

3:¹⁶"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

Almighty God, who gave your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of the virgin Mary:
grant that we being born again and made your children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit,
ever one God, now and for ever. Amen.

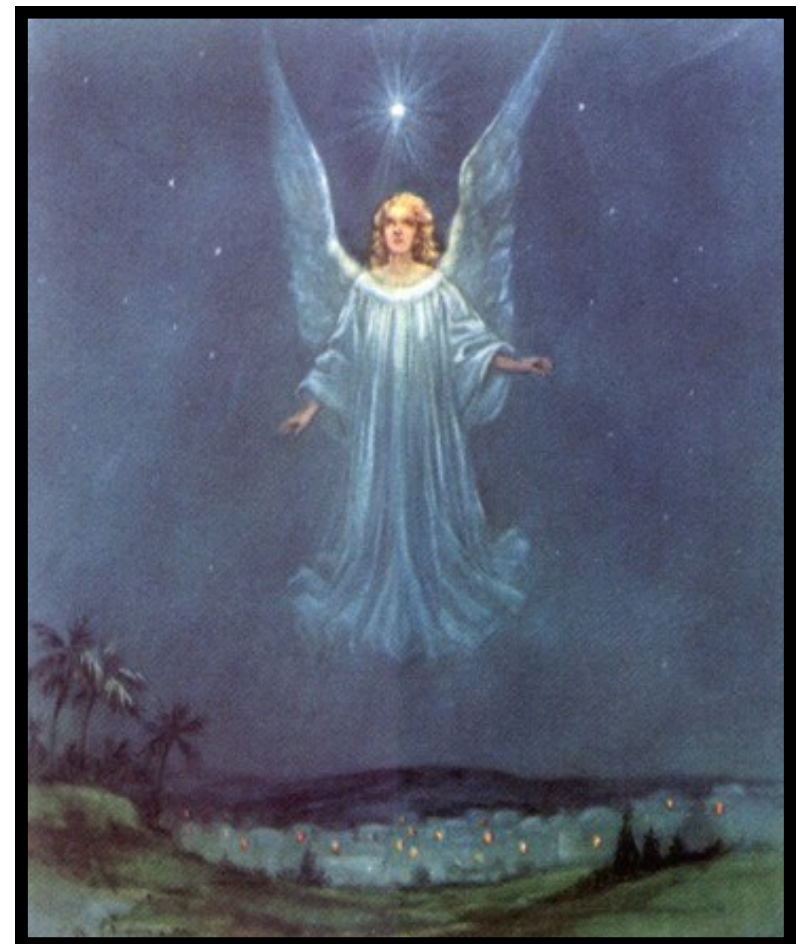
And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and
minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among
you and remain with you always.

Amen

Let's stand to sing together
Joy to the World (268 TIS)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
In the Name of Christ, Amen

CHRISTMAS CAROLS AND HOLY COMMUNION



WELCOME

How Christmas has become...

"And there were in the same country children keeping watch over their stockings by the fireplace. And, Lo! Santa Claus came upon them; and they were sore afraid. And Santa said unto them: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people who can afford them. For unto you will be given great feasts of turkey, dressing and cake; and many presents; and this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the presents, wrapped in bright paper, lying beneath a tree adorned with tinsel, coloured balls and lights. And suddenly, there will be with you a multitude of relatives and friends, praising you and saying, "Thank you so much, it was just what I wanted." And it shall come to pass as the friends and relatives have gone away into their own homes, the parents shall say to one another, "Darn it! What a mess to clean up! I'm tired, let's go to bed and pick it up tomorrow. Thank goodness, Christmas only comes once a year!" And they go with haste to their bed and find their desired rest."

Today is an invitation to come back in time. To realise that Christmas is not just a huge hassle or a nice tradition. These are not fairy stories. But this is reality. And it wasn't just for people two thousand years ago.

HOW WE RESPOND TO THIS EVENT REALLY MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE TO-DAY

We stand to sing together **O Come all ye Faithful (304 TIS vs 1,2,5 & 8)**

Luke 2:1-12 ¹About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. ²This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. ⁴So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. ⁵He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

⁶While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

⁸There were shepherders camping in the neighbourhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. ⁹Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. ¹⁰The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, world-wide: ¹¹A Saviour has just been born in David's town, a Saviour who is Messiah and Master. ¹²This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

AFTER COMMUNION

We are thousands of kilometres removed from that first Christmas scene.
Our season is Summer

CHRISTMAS EVE "Australian Psalms"

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, goodwill toward all people!

The dry grass has turned light brown
crackling under footsteps like crisp paper.
Soak-hoses and sprinklers are at work
greening gardens and preserving shrubs.
The starlings arrive for a drink,
while two brown doves take a shower.
In the old palm trees the sparrows gossip,
and from the gum trees cicadas sing.

The highways are already thick with cars
packed with parents, presents, children, and pets.
In city parks crowds gather at dusk
to sing by candlelight the much-loved carols.
Near midnight many stream into churches
ordinary people sharing an extraordinary faith:
Glorifying again the Word made flesh,
tasting the royal Bread and priceless Wine.

Tomorrow the summer sun will wake us early,
the few hours' sleep swiftly fled.
Even then, children will be out on the footpaths,
their scooters, prams, and bikes sparkling.
At church, family worship will have many guests—
cousins, grandparents, new toy bears, and dolls!
Outside church, more cards, kisses, and greetings—
'Merry Christmas' under the hot morning sun.

By midday the aroma of turkey and mint peas
will blend with the fragrance of fruit salad and puddings;
The scent of pollens on a warm summer wind,
mixed with the smell of pine needles and fruit punch.

THE STORY OF THE LAST SUPPER

Among friends, gathered round a table,
Jesus took bread,
And, having blessed it,
He broke the bread
And gave it to his disciples, saying,
This is my body which is given for you'.

In the same way he took wine,
And, having given thanks for it
He poured it out
And gave the cup to his disciples, saying,
'This cup is the new relationship with God,
Sealed with my blood.
Take this and share it.
I shall drink wine with you next in the coming kingdom of God'.

We who are many are one body
For we all share in the one bread

WORDS OF INVITATION

At the Last Supper Jesus, sharing bread and wine,
Invited the disciples to share his journey.
Like many grains of wheat becoming one loaf of bread,
The disciples were invited to become one body with him.
Here today, through bread and wine,
We renew our journey with Jesus and his disciples.
Here, through bread and wine, We renew our unity with one another,
And with all those who have gone before us in this place,
Through bread and wine,
We renew our communion with the earth
And our interwovenness with the broken ones of the world.
So come, taste of this bread and wine.
Gifts of the earth, work of human hands,
Food both of earth and of heaven.

*All who know Christ as Lord and Saviour
are welcome to partake of the bread and wine*

Let's stay seated to sing together
While Shepherds Watched (299 TIS)

Luke 2:13-14 - ¹³At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing
God's praises:

¹⁴Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

Let's stand to sing together
Hark the Herald (303 TIS)

Luke 2:15-20 - ¹⁵As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders
talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves
what God has revealed to us." ¹⁶They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph,
and the baby lying in the manger. ¹⁷Seeing was believing. They told everyone they
met what the angels had said about this child. ¹⁸All who heard the shepherders
were impressed.

¹⁹Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within her-
self. ²⁰The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for eve-
rything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

Let's stay seated to sing together
O Little Town of Bethlehem (316 TIS)

John writes of Jesus' birth at the beginning of his Gospel....

John 1:9-14

⁹The Life-Light was the real thing:

Every person entering Life he brings into Light.

¹⁰He was in the world,
the world was there through him,
and yet the world didn't even notice.

¹¹He came to his own people, but they didn't want him.

¹²But whoever did want him,
who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said,
He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves.

¹³These are the God-begotten,
not blood-begotten, not flesh-begotten, not sex-begotten.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,

Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

Paul puts it this way in Philippians 2:5-8
⁵Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. ⁶He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. ⁷Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*! ⁸Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process.

Let's stand to sing together **Away in a Manger (318 TIS)**

ADDRESS

INTERCESSIONS

ending with...

Receive the prayers of your people for the people of this world through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray...

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 for ever. Amen.**

The angel said, "You shall call his name, Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

CONFESSION

Most merciful God,
we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
and in what we have failed to do:
we have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;
we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.
Father, forgive us.
Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The priest pronounces the absolution

We have turned our hearts to God in repentance
and our sins are laid bare before the cross of Jesus Christ.
God forgives you in Jesus Christ, in whom there is no condemnation

We receive God's mercy and forgiveness.

Lead us, Holy Spirit to walk in the light of Christ. Amen.

THE PEACE

We are the body of Christ

His Spirit is with us

The peace of the Lord be always with you

And also with you

We exchange peace with one another

We stand to sing our offertory song
The Virgin Mary—Calypso Carol (307 TIS)

THE BLESSING OF BREAD AND WINE

Almighty God we thank you that you loved the world so much that you sent your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord to this world to live the only perfect human life and to die as the sacrifice for our sins, to set us free from sin and death, and redeem us to friendship with you.

This day we lift our voices to praise you, saying...

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord Jesus Christ,

We thank you for your presence with us now.

As we do in this place what you did in an upstairs room,

Breathe your Spirit upon us

That this bread and this wine may be heaven's food and drink for us,

Renewing, sustaining and making us whole,

And that we may be your body on earth,

Loving and caring in the world.