

WESLEY UNITING CHURCH GEELONG

**CHRISTMAS DAY 2023**



**Rev. Tupe Ioelu**

**A WARM WELCOME** to any who are visiting or worshipping with us for the first time today. Please make yourselves known. We trust you will enjoy this time of fellowship with us. You are invited to join us over a cuppa after the service.

***We acknowledge the Traditional owners of the land on which Wesley is built. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.***

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Wonder of wonders,

God has come to us!

***Not as a judge, but a Saviour,***

***not in power, but as a servant.***

Wonder of wonders,

God comes to us!

***Not in silence, but in the Word made flesh;***

***not in the shadows, but bringing Light.***

Wonder of wonders!

God is with us!

***Let us worship God.***

**SONG TIS 304 V, 1,2,3,7**

O come all ye faithful

1.

O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
come and behold him born the king of angels:

*Refrain*

*O come, let us adore him,*

*O come, let us adore him,*

*O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

2.

True God of true God, Light of Light eternal,  
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb,  
Son of the Father, begotten, not created:

3.

See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,  
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with holy fear;  
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps:

7.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,

Jesus, to thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father now in flesh appearing:

TIS 304

O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
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## **CHRISTMAS DAY CANDLE LIGHTING**

### **PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

God of light, we thank you for giving us the gift of Jesus Christ. We come before you with wonder and delight that you come to us in the child born in a manger. Be with us on this day of birth and rebirth. Come, honour us with the presence of your gracious, joyful Spirit. Fill our weary hearts with renewed hope and joy. Rekindle in our souls the light of Christ. Glory to you in the highest, O God, glory in the highest! **Amen.**

### **SONG TIS 301 V, 1,2,3,4.**

The first nowell the angel did say  
1.

#### **The first nowell the angels did say**

was to certain poor shepherds  
in fields as they lay,  
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Chorus:

*Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,  
Born is the King of Israel.*

2.

When they looked they saw a star  
shining in the east, beyond them far,  
and to the earth it gave a great light  
and so it continued both day and night.

3.

And by the light of that same star  
three wise men came from country far;

to seek for a king was their intent  
and to follow the star wherever it went.

4.

This star drew nigh to the north-west;  
over Bethlehem it took its rest,  
and there it did both stop and stay  
right over the place where Jesus lay.

TIS 301

**The first nowell the angels did say**

Words in the Public Domain

### **PRAYER OF ADORATION**

We greet your coming, God, with wonder:

You come to be with us; yet you remain far greater than we can imagine.

You are near; yet your wisdom sets you apart from us.

You appear among us; yet we cannot describe your glory.

We greet your coming, God, with repentance:

We are more or less satisfied with ourselves; but your presence exposes our sin  
and failure.

We are self-confident; but you challenge our confidence in ourselves.

We are proud of our understanding; but you show us that we do not know  
everything.

We greet your coming, God, with joy:

We had no true idea of what you are like; but you have shown us yourself in Jesus  
Christ.

We felt our human life could be of no importance to you; but you have shown its  
value by appearing among us as a man.

We are aware of the gulf between us and you; but you have bridged it with love.  
God, we greet your coming in Jesus Christ our Lord!

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Almighty God, we confess that Jesus is Lord.

We confess that your love has come into the world, incarnate in the person of  
Jesus the Christ, and that you have been revealed to us through his love, grace,  
and truth.

We confess that through Christ we have the promise of eternal life, the hope of  
salvation, and the forgiveness of our sins.

We confess that through Christ we are challenged to love our neighbours as if  
they were ourselves, we are encouraged to seek reconciliation and wholeness,  
and we are empowered to work for your justice.

We confess that you are the One in whom we live and move and have our being.

We confess that you are the Love that saves the world.  
In the name of Emmanuel, God With Us, Jesus the Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

### **DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS**

Jesus Christ, the exact likeness of God's own being,  
has come into the world full of grace and truth.  
He has made purification for sins, and to all who believe in him,  
he gives the power to become children of God.  
Brothers and Sisters in Christ, be at peace  
for your sins are forgiven.  
Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

### **SONG TIS 303**

Hark the herald angels sing

1.

Hark! the herald angels sing  
glory to the new-born King,  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.  
Joyful, all you nations, rise,  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with the angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

#### *Refrain*

*Hark! the herald angels sing  
glory to the newborn King.*

2.

Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come,  
offspring of a virgin's womb:  
veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
hail, the incarnate Deity,  
pleased in human flesh to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel.

3.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
risen with healing in his wings;  
mild he lays his glory by,  
born that we no more need die,  
born to raise us from the earth,  
born to give us second birth.

TIS 303,  
Hark! the herald angels sing  
Words in the Public Domain

## **BIBLE READINGS**

### **Isaiah 52:7-10**

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

### **John 1:1-14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

## **REFLECTION**

### **SONG TIS 309 (V1,2,3)**

Angels from the realms of glory

1.

Angels from the realms of glory,  
wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
heralds of creation's story,  
now proclaim Messiah's birth:

*Refrain*

*come and worship Christ,  
the newborn King,  
come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn King.*

2.

Shepherds, in the fields abiding,  
watching over flocks by night  
God with us is now residing;  
yonder shines the infant Light:

3.

Wise men, leave your contemplations,  
brighter visions beam afar;  
seek the great Desire of nations,  
you have seen his natal star:

TIS 309

Angels from the realms of glory  
James Montgomery 1771-1854 alt.  
Words in the Public Domain

### **OFFERING AND PRAYER**

Loving God, receive and bless these gifts which we give in response to the greatest gift of all - your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. May our lives and this offering towards the Christmas Bowl be used to reveal your love in as many ways and to as many people as possible. This we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

### **INTERCESSION**

O God, we thank you for the message of love that Christmas brings to a world where

hatred and violence is experienced by so many people in so many places. Help us to reveal in our lives the love that Jesus so embodied, the love that Paul wrote about so eloquently - the love that is patient and kind; the love that is never envious or boastful, or arrogant or rude; the love that does not insist on its own way and is not irritable or resentful; that in all things we may put love first.

O God, we thank you for the message of joy that Christmas brings to a world grown used to suffering. We remember in your presence the hungry and homeless men, women and young people, our brothers and sisters in Christ, who cry out for a word of tenderness, a touch of love, a sign of hope, some practical help; we remember also those for whom this season is clouded by loneliness or anxiety or bereavement.

We pray that they may be kept from bitterness and despair as they remember the birth of him who bore our grief and carried our sorrows, yet who was born at Bethlehem that people might experience life in all its fullness.

O God, we thank you for the message of kindness that Christmas brings to a world grown self-centred and cynical through greed. Help us to remember that Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve. May we all find true joy and fulfilment in giving ourselves in service to others as we remember together the birth of him who came to give himself to us.

O God, we thank you for the message of peace that Christmas brings to our troubled world. Give peace among nations; peace in lands torn apart by warring factions; peace in our homes and in our hearts as we remember the birth at Bethlehem of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord.

***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.***

## **SONG TIS 268**

Joy to the World, the Lord is come.

1.

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
let earth receive its king;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,



and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2.

Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;  
let us our songs employ;  
while fields and streams, rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

TIS 268

Joy to the world! The Lord is come  
Words in the Public Domain

### **BENEDICTION**

Go now, and join your voices with the song of joy in all creation.  
Announce peace. Herald salvation. Let the earth know that God reigns.  
And may God sustain you with his powerful Word.  
May Christ Jesus be born as Saviour within you.  
And may the Spirit reveal to you the glory  
of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.  
And may the grace... **AMEN**

### **SONG TIS 311**

Silent night

1.

Silent night, holy night:  
all is calm, all is bright  
round the virgin mother and child,

holy infant so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace,  
sleep in heavenly peace.

2.

Silent night, holy night:  
shepherds quake at the sight;  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heavenly hosts sing, 'Alleluia!;  
Christ the Saviour is born,  
Christ the Saviour is born.'

3.

Silent night, holy night:  
wondrous star, lend your light;  
with the angels let us sing  
Alleluia to our King;  
Christ our Saviour is born,  
Christ our Saviour is born.

TIS 311

Silent night, holy night  
Words in the Public Domain

