



**BORONIA PARK
UNITING CHURCH
SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE**

Preparing for Worship

Welcome to our worship service today! You may worship wherever you are with the people of God at Boronia Park UC together in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This worship resources are prepared by Kevin Lee, one of our lay preachers at Boronia Park UC.

We have been in our Advent journey. During this season of Advent, we are exploring what it means for us to wait the coming of Christ Child, the prince of peace and the Son for us to save. Also, the theme for this season 2020 is **“Which story of Jesus Christ should we bring to life?”** Whatever story about Jesus who comes into your life and His birth comes in your mind first place, we anticipate that it would be your life-giving gift to your family, friends, colleagues or neighbours. As God gives His only son for us and His Creation as Good News, we may bring it to others this Advent and Christmas. Which story comes up in your mind now?

Acknowledgement for the First Peoples

We would like to begin by acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to them with our faithful prayer in this worship.

Lighting of the Advent Candle for Peace

For Yolŋu people, Märr-ŋamathinyamirr is the deep love and affection we first learn in our families and kinship relationships that extends outwards to include God's creation. As Christmas draws near, we give thanks for God's great love. God sends Jesus not to condemn the world but to save it. He unites us into one family. God loved the world so much that he sent his Son, that believing in him, we should not perish but have everlasting life.

Thanks be to God.

Call to Worship

Creator God, we gather together
from many places, pasts and communities
to celebrate and worship together,
as your people.

We come to worship God.

Jesus, life-giver,
we celebrate all that brings us together.
We are on a journey, learning and celebrating.
We come to worship Jesus.

Spirit of love,
we are a living community and we give thanks
for the movement of the Spirit –
ever inspiring, strengthening,
moving and challenging us.
We come to worship the Spirit.

Amen!

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Let us pray:

O Lord,
How we adore thee.
How we marvel at the depth of your love.
How we wonder at the waves of your grace.
How we are astounded by the glorious balance of the earth.
We are in awe of the vastness of the universe.
We are so privileged to be called your children.
We are accepted and forgiven and embraced.

You are almighty, above and beyond everything.
You are victorious.
Darkness, sin and death are under your feet.
You are holy, beautiful and full of love.

How we adore thee.

Amen.

Hymn: Morning Has Broken

Morning has broken,
Like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken,
like the first bird
Praise for the singing,
praise for the morning
Praise for the springing,
fresh from the word

Sweet the rain's new fall,
sunlit from heaven
Like the first dewfall,
on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness
of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness
where his feet pass

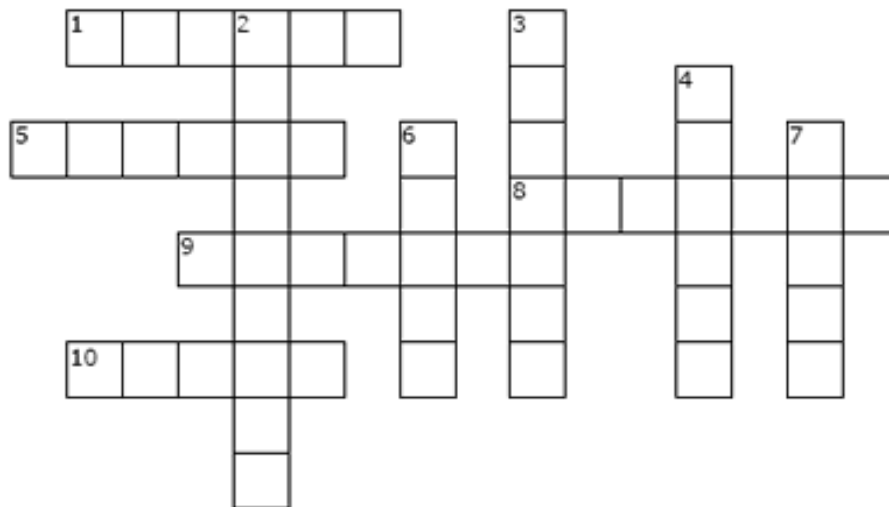
Mine is the sunlight,
mine is the morning
Born of the one light,
Eden saw play
Praise with elation,
praise every morning
God's recreation of the new day

Children's Talk – Robyn Harvey

A Visit from an Angel

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. Luke 1:30-31

Based on Luke 1:26-38 (NIV)



ACROSS

1. The man to whom Mary was engaged to be married
5. A pure or unmarried woman; a maiden
8. The name of the angel who appeared to Mary
9. To be joined together as husband and wife
10. A heavenly being; a messenger for God

DOWN

2. Relative of Mary who was the mother of John the Baptist
3. A nation or territory ruled by a king or queen
4. To be filled with fear
6. A very young person especially between infancy and youth
7. The son who was born to Mary

ELIZABETH	GABRIEL	VIRGIN	KINGDOM	JESUS
MARRIED	AFRAID	CHILD	JOSEPH	ANGEL

Hymn: The Love of God is Greater Far

The love of God is greater far
than tongue or pen can ever tell;
it goes beyond the highest star,
and reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair bowed down with care
God gave his Son to win;
his erring child he reconciled,
and pardoned every sin.

*O love of God, how rich and pure;
how measureless and strong!
It shall for evermore endure,
the saints' and angels' song.*

When time at last shall pass away,
and earthly thrones and kingdoms fall;
When those who here refuse to pray
on rocks and hills and mountains call;
God's love, so sure, shall still endure
all measureless and strong,
redeeming grace to Adam's race,
the saints' and angels' song.

O love of God, how rich and pure ...

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
and were the skies of parchment made;
were every stalk on earth a quill,
and everyone a scribe by trade;

to write the love of God above
would drain the ocean dry;
nor could the scroll contain the whole,
though stretched from sky to sky.

O love of God, how rich and pure ...

Fredrick Martin Lehman
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Bible Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 & Luke 1:26-36 (NIV)

God's Promise to David

7 After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ² he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.”

³ Nathan replied to the king, “Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.”

⁴ But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:

⁵ “Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? ⁶ I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.’ ⁷ Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?””

⁸ “Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have

gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth.¹⁰ And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you:

¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me^[a]; your throne will be established forever.”

The Gospel reading comes from Luke 1:26-36.

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Hymn: Amazing Grace

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
‘tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

Sermon – Kevin Lee

On this 4th Sunday of Advent and the second last Sunday for 2020, I can say it has been one of the most difficult of years in my life for many different reasons. It has been a year which has been challenging to say the least for people all over the world. It's amazing how this year has panned out with life forever changing in so many ways and how we have come to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. With the pandemic surging again in Sydney in recent days, it really hits home how fast we need vital information and how fast we need to react to potentially save lives. This is a challenge for all of us. A huge challenge for Government, especially the Health department and police force.

But as we wind down from the busy-ness of our lives to enjoy and celebrate Christmas with family and those close to us (maybe in a limited format from other times), it is always a time to reflect on the year that has passed. Like the three wise men or the shepherds that heralded the arrival of Jesus in the birth stories, we wish to celebrate one of Christianity's most meaningful occasions.

Don't you find it challenging that sometimes the smallest or even invisible items of this world are the most powerful at times. Things we cannot see (some of which we take for granted). Do you know what I mean? Wind, electricity, magnetic forces, the force of gravity which rules the planets. Anything else? Yes, viruses. They may be small and we cannot see them with our eyes but they play a major role in our health and wellbeing. Anything else? So please hold this thought.

Last weekend, Isabella and I ventured out to the north of Sydney (Central Coast hinterland – west of Wyong) with some astronomy minded friends

to look at the annual meteor shower called the Geminids. It's a meteor shower that originates from the constellation of Gemini which is overhead in Australia in mid-December around midnight. It's probably about the brightest meteor shower which Australia can see each and every year and it is a mere 10 days or so before Christmas. Unfortunately, we have had a wet week here in Sydney and especially in the evening where clouds formed preventing the view of the stars. But last Saturday up near Bucketty and Kulnura (where it is very dark at night away from the light glow of Sydney) for those that know the area around the Central Coast hinterland, we waited for the clouds to move and move they did revealing incredibly bright stars so numerous that it was quite astounding.

We moved the cars a few times going from one vantage point to see the northern sky and we drove around for some 3 hours (even up a small mountain) till we found our best patch of open sky to set up our viewing cameras etc. One of my friends showed Bella and I old photos from 1986 which he had taken of Halley's Comet (a periodic comet which comes around every 75-79 years – next appearance in 2061). Unfortunately, the weather started to worsen and the clouds gathered around 1am but we did see up to three streaking meteors which lit up the sky. A lot of effort to see something so rare and what a challenge it was to find an ideal viewing location. So after almost 7 hours on the road and arriving home near 3am, it was a lot of work to see something so fleeting but so beautiful. Did I get any photos of the meteors? No. Was the effort or challenge worth it? Yes in my opinion. Not what I was expecting but it's always a learning experience but still was able to see the meteors.

So this brings me back to the bible readings or passages of today. 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 and Luke 1:26-38. What a pairing of readings that Josh had read out! Maybe I should say what a challenge. What a challenge to write a sermon about.

For myself understanding Christmas is so widely different to my understanding and opinion of Christmas which I had held in my first 35 years of my life. Lots of people today (and I don't mean people of a Christian faith), they don't really think of Christmas as having any religious significance but more of a time to spend with family and a time to relax and recharge before it starts all again. I was brought up in the Catholic tradition (just down the road from here at Holy Cross College) and Mary the Mother of Jesus is so adored that we committed to memory so many songs about Mary and performed the rosary weekly (we Patrician Brothers were paired with the Marist Sisters down at Woolwich). I guess Protestants just don't have that same connection with Mary as do the Catholics.

But once I started researching and studying the Bible through lay courses and other, one can start to understand why Christmas sometimes needs to be reframed in our understanding. Only 2 of the Gospels even mention the birth story of Jesus (Mark and John don't mention the Birth of Jesus). And even Matthew and Luke (both were written in the last 20 years of the first century) have different birth stories of Jesus.

In Matthew, the genealogy of Jesus goes back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, and from David onward its traced through the kings of Israel. In Luke, the genealogy of Jesus goes back to Adam, the father of Jews and Gentiles, and from David onward is traced through the prophets of Israel.

In Matthew, the family of Jesus lives in Bethlehem, where Jesus is born at home, and moves to Nazareth after returning from the flight into Egypt. In Luke, the family of Jesus lives in Nazareth and travels to Bethlehem

because of the census and so Jesus is born “on the road” in a stable, after which the family returns to its home in Nazareth.

In Matthew, the people come to the birth are the wise men following the star. In Luke there is neither star nor wise men, rather there are shepherds. In Matthew, King Herod the Great orders the slaughter of male infants in Bethlehem, which leads to Jesus’ family to seek refuge in Egypt. In Luke, there is no such slaughter and no flight into Egypt.

With all these differences to the birth stories, Christian scholars conclude that the birth stories are not historical accounts but they are more importantly symbolic narratives created by the early Christian movement. Luke with the genealogy of Jesus traced back through the prophets and with the shepherds (who were marginalised people) as the ones to whom the news of the birth comes, Luke emphasises Jesus as a radical social prophet.

Walter Brueggemann (a leading Old Testament scholar) stated that 2 Samuel 7 is the most important chapter in the Old Testament, if not the whole of Scripture itself. This is a very strong claim, but the issues of faith and life that directly or indirectly bear on this text in both Israel and the Church more than support it. In a way it is quite unfortunate that the lectionary reading for 2 Samuel 7 is placed less than a week out from Christmas and also when people are expecting a sermon about Mary (sorry not today). But the church has an intention for this lectionary pairing of 2 Samuel 7 and Luke 1:26-36.

Luke’s annunciation explicitly links the birth of this coming baby to the royal line of David, providing the reader with a reversal in the fortunes of the people of God (after centuries of exile), as well as a renewal of the promise made so long ago. But this is what makes 2 Samuel 7 so

interesting for preaching in Advent. The narrative context of David's big plans to build Yahweh a house (i.e. a temple), which Yahweh rebuffs with the promise instead to David that HE will be the one getting the house (i.e. a dynasty), is one which symbolises with wealth and power. At this time in the story, David has subdued his enemies, both internally and externally. He has come to this point by the conventional means of getting to such a place in his career, having flattered, lied, betrayed, or killed anyone who stood in his way. David is no angel. But for all his faults, everybody loves David, because whatever else he is, he's a winner—especially where it counts the most, over Israel's and Judah's arch enemies, the Philistines.

So whilst the audience of Luke expects a paradigm where a king arises out of David's line to rule Israel once again with power and might to conquer the oppressors of the day, Luke foreshadows the development of the child Jesus isn't going to be anything like the expected paradigm. It is like Yahweh subverting David's plans for a house in 2 Samuel 7.

And here is the great message I understand about and celebrate Christmas in my more mature understanding. Like Yahweh picking out young David from Jesse's line of son's, God chooses from seeing our hearts. Mary is a young unmarried girl – married early in antiquity and she is engaged, so she is probably no more than 15. And she lives in a second-rate town, Nazareth, a nearby working-class suburb of the great city of Sepphoris, a sure sign of ignominy if ever there was one, as later recounted insults about Jesus origins will attest in the narrative all the way to the inscription over his head on the cross. In other words, this child of Mary is a nobody from nowhere. Yet it will be this forgettable, easily dismissed child whom God will raise up to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the greatest of all who ever lived and ruled, but nothing

like any who have gone before him in those roles. Mary did you know that your baby boy will some day walk on water.....

One of the main reasons the Church celebrates Advent is to ready us for the surprise ending to the story, that the Messiah ends up being nothing like what he was expected to be. His birth story in Luke will be the culmination of that early abasement, in a humble cattle stable. And thus the kingdom which he comes proclaiming and the one for which he later teaches his disciples to be yearning is as different from others of its kind as the Messiah will also be from all other kings.

In Advent, we are called to wrap our minds around the prospect of the impending “God with Us” and what that presence means for all of life. The theological and political implications of the child who comes thus challenges all of our basic assumptions about how we love, who we befriend, how we spend, what we consume and how we even vote, for he upsets what we thought we were supposed to be doing, what we thought mattered, and how all of that was supposed to be achieved. God’s plan to fulfill the promise made to David and to reconcile the world was not about wealth and power, and this one fact turns all that we value in this world on its head.

Christmas is about celebrating the wonders of God’s love and what we truly value in life. The life of Jesus as a social prophet in this day and age really challenges us to what is truly meaningful in life and it is not all about wealth and power. Small things, even invisible to most people are the greatest change agents. A simple sorry may have profound affects to people and countless lives. God is a God of small but great things and in Christmas I marvel at God’s wisdom and the child of Mary.

Prayers of the People – Jenny Keast

Dear Heavenly Father

As the Advent season draws us closer to Christmas we marvel at the plan you had to redeem your people. Thank you that you have not left us lost, navigating life, left to our own devices. We rejoice that you have given us LOVE, JOY, PEACE and HOPE upon which to focus, not just at Christmas but every day of the year.

We pray for ourselves and others when these things seem lost from our lives and pray that dark times are replaced with renewed trust in you.

Lord, we are conscious that Christmas is not a joyful time for many and we are thankful for those who work to make this time better them. Thank you for the Christmas Bowl and other charity organisations who are doing your work in our world.

Be close to those who are nursing loved ones and those whose health is poor. Give us patience to be alongside those whose life is difficult and not to push people aside.

Thank you for those in our church and many others who have served you faithfully during COVID. Thank you for the effort Ministers have made to keep their congregations worshipping you.

We pray for our local Anglican Parish of Hunters Hill and we thank you for their faithful witness and service. In our World Cycle of Prayer we pray for Japan, North Korea, South Korea and Taiwan particularly as they respond to the Corona virus. We pray for peaceful resolutions to issues

in these areas and a lessening of militaristic solutions to problems. Thank you for Christians who faithfully serve you.

Thank you for Kevin's willingness to assist in leading worship today and for his family who serve you faithfully with their gifts and talents.

We continue to pray for Seungjae and his family as they navigate their ministry in this parish. Continue to lead them by your Spirit and support them as they serve you.

As Christmas Day approaches we pray for the LOVE, PEACE, JOY and HOPE of Advent so that we can serve you better in the future.

In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

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 glory are yours now and forever.

Amen.

Hymn: Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim though this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through;
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer.
be thou still my Strength and Shield,
be thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
bear me through the swelling current,
land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

Offering and Dedication

Let us pray:

Holy and eternal God,
whose vision for humanity
is justice, peace and wholeness;
by the presence of your Spirit
may our generosity flourish,
and our living
hasten the advent of your vision.
Amen.

The offering will be used for the congregation's continuing mission and ministry including young people and youth ministry in these changing times. Please make your offering through a Bank Deposit or a personal cheque whichever is convenient to you.

Account Name: Boronia Park Uniting Church
BSB: 634-634
Account: 100023784
Reference: Offering

Please contact Robyn Harvey, Treasurer on 0418 783 290 or robyn.49@bigpond.net.au for more information about how to make Direct Debit.

Blessing and Dismissal

May the love of God bless you and keep you;
the mercy and faithfulness of Jesus Christ
be born in your hearts;
and the Holy Spirit create and bring dreams
to reality in your lives.
Amen.

Go in peace;
refreshed and renewed in the eternal love of God.
In the name of Christ.
Amen.

Sung Blessing: Shalom to You Now

Shalom to you now,
shalom, my friends.
May God's full mercies
bless **you**, my friends.

In all your living
and through your loving,
Christ be your **shalom**,
Christ be your **shalom**.

Elise Shoemaker Eslinger
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