**Macedon Ranges Partnership Christmas Day service 25th December 2020**

You may like to follow our service on our video. You can find it on our Worship Services page on our website at <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services> or on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/KtnHpAJE5Og>. Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. Allow the stories told to lead you. We suggest reading the passages when suggested below. We are touching on several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

If you would like to look at previous videos on our YouTube channel, go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb4hzdO-YgzmrIRVC-oby_w>.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

You are welcome here, as we reflect in different rooms and districts, States and Countries around the world, our spiritual connectedness through Christ Jesus, is remembered.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

If you celebrate Christmas to add some happiness to your life,

Can’t promise to entertain you,

But can point you to that which really matters, and maybe that will put a spring in your step.

If you celebrate Christmas to honour tradition,

Can’t promise to honour the tradition you value,

But can lead you towards that which is new and life giving.

If you celebrate Christmas as a family occasion,

Can’t promise this to be the family time you want,

But can remind you that you are part of God’s family.

If you celebrate Christmas to make the struggles you face easier,

Can’t promise your problems will be solved,

But can share with you the one who walks beside you as friend.

We recognise that even in the times of celebration and remembrance, what results is not always what is sought. But in the midst of this we invite you to be open to the moving of the Spirit of God

**Lighting of the Christ Candle**

*You may like to light a candle to remind yourself of the presence of the light of Christ.*

We again light the candles of hope, peace, love and joy.

*The first four candles are lit.*

As we light the final candle, we remember what the prophets promised so long ago.

Lord, you come as a tiny, fragile baby; yet we know that you are God, and you are with us. May the flame of this candle remind us that you are the light of the world and we are called to follow you, and share that light with people we meet.

*The Christ candle is lit.*

**You may like to sing this or another carol: TIS 304 O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL**

**READ: LUKE 2:1 – 7**

**OPENING PRAYER** **PSALM 96** *selections adapted ©2001 Nathan Nettleton* [*LaughingBird.net*](http://www.laughingbird.net)  
We never tire of telling the story of how you looked after us;  
***all over the world, we speak of your incredible accomplishments;***You are the greatest, LORD; we can’t praise you enough!  
***When it comes to gods, you are in a league of your own;  
        all other objects of devotion are powerless.***We offer ourselves to you, LORD;

    You have set the world on firm foundations,  
        and with you in charge, everyone will get a fair go.  
***Let the heavens and the earth celebrate;  
    let the roar of the sea join in;  
        let everything that walks, flies or swims join the party!***You are on your way, LORD,  
to set things right on the earth.

**A CONFESSION**

We love to sing the old, familiar carols, but we are also called to tell the story in new ways; ways which acknowledge all the things that the Lord has done.

For as Christmas comes round year by year, Lord, we're tempted to say, “We've heard all this before. We know the story off by heart.”  
***Forgive us, Lord, and remind us of the difference between knowing it and letting it speak to us again and again.***

***Forgive us, Lord, and remind us of the joy of your presence, so that our singing will be from the heart.***

**ASSURANCE OF GRACE: READING: TITUS 3: 4-7**

4But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, 5he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. 6He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. 7Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

**SOME CHRISTMAS QUESTIONS**

**You may like to sing this or another carol: TIS 313 GOOD CHRISTIANS ALL REJOICE**

**Prayers of Intercession** *(see Sunbury PPTs Christmas 2011) (Adapted from prayers from 'Worship Now': D.Cairns, I Pitt-Watson, J.A.Whyte, T.B. Honeyman, The St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1972 source: Moira Laidlaw)*

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 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. May we all find true joy 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. **Amen**

**OFFERING**

*You may like to put some money aside for the Christmas Bowl appeal or another suitable charity. You can donate to the Christmas bowl through your congregation or via* [*https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/donate*](https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/donate)*.*

**DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING**

We offer these gifts, and our time and talents as an act of celebration of divine love which holds each of us. May these gifts be used to further the way of God’s love, hope and justice, in this city and our world. Amen.

**You may like to sing this or another carol: TIS 306 CHRISTIANS AWAKE**

**SENDING OUT: THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS** *by Howard Thurman, Graphics by Heather Peck*

When the star in the sky is gone,

When the Kings and Princes are home,

When the shepherds are back with their flocks,

The work of Christmas begins.

To find the lost,

To heal the broken,

To feed the hungry

To release the prisoner,

To teach the nations,  
To bring Christ to all,

To make music in the heart.

We go from here, to live that story, to tell the story again of love born at Christmas and to be bearers of peace, love, hope and joy.

May Emmanuel, God with us, be with you and remain with you always. Amen.