



*Sunday January 3rd, 2021*  
*Christmas 2 & Epiphany*  
***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***



***Gathering & Lighting the Candle***

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Look! Here we are!  
 The old year has gone,  
 the new one has begun.  
 Goodbye 2020, hello 2021!

**We light a candle to acknowledge  
 the presence of Christ,  
 Emmanuel, God with us.**

*John 1:5* The light shines in the darkness,  
 and the darkness did not overcome it.

***Call to worship***

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Come from all the ends of the earth;  
**follow stars, follow our hearts,  
 follow the path that leads to life.**

Gather here as one body;  
**one with each other, one with the earth,  
 one in Christ who binds us together.**

Rest on us, eternal Spirit of light;  
**fill us with hope and wonder,  
 let this time bring joy and peace.**

***Acknowledging***

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*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
 Christian Congress*

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we gather, in Gippsland this is the Bunurong, the Boon Wurrung and the Gunnai Kurnai people. We pay respects to elders past,

present and emerging and commit ourselves to truth-telling, justice and walking together as First and Second Peoples.

***Singing***

***The Virgin Mary had a baby boy*** TIS 307

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The virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
 the virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
 the virgin Mary had a baby boy  
 and they say that his name was Jesus.

*He come from the glory,  
 he come from the glorious kingdom;  
 he come from the glory,  
 he come from the glorious kingdom.  
 O yes, believer! O yes, believer!  
 He come from the glory,  
 he come from the glorious kingdom.*

The angels sang when the baby born,  
 the angels sang when the baby born,  
 the angels sang when the baby born  
 and proclaim him the baby Jesus.

*He come from the glory, ...*

The wise men saw where the baby born,  
 the wise men saw where the baby born,  
 the wise men saw where the baby born,  
 and they say that his name was Jesus.

*He come from the glory ...*

West Indian traditional carol

***Prayer***

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Often on the first Sunday of the year, Methodists hold an annual Covenant Service – a celebration of all that God has done and an affirmation that we give our lives and choices to God. It is an invitation for people to renew their covenant relationship with God.

The Methodist Church was one of three churches that came into union in 1977 to form the Uniting Church in Australia, so this practice of an annual renewal of our covenantal relationship with God is part of our heritage. You are invited to read this prayer through once and then, if possible, to listen to it being read aloud, and then pray it aloud.

**John Wesley's Covenant Prayer *(alt)***

I am no longer my own but yours,  
put me to what you will,  
place me with who you will,  
put me to doing,  
put me to suffering.

Let me be put to work for you  
or set aside for you,  
praised for you,  
or criticised for you.

Let me be full, let me be empty.  
Let me have all things,  
let me have nothing.  
I freely and fully  
surrender all things  
to your glory and service.

and now,

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O wonderful and holy God;  
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,  
you are mine and I am yours,  
so be it,

and the covenant  
I have made on earth,  
let it also be made in heaven.  
Amen.

You're invited to study this prayer deeper when you have some quiet time at home, or gather in a group, as you are able.

Here's a link to a study guide:

[https://www.rootsontheweb.com/content/PDFs/346041/Methodist Covenant Prayer study.pdf](https://www.rootsontheweb.com/content/PDFs/346041/Methodist_Covenant_Prayer_study.pdf)

**Listening**

Read: (Epiphany) Matthew 2:1-12  
(Christmas 2) Ephesians 1 v 3-14  
John 1 v 1-9, 10-18

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

**Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson**

How wonderful that our first reflection for the year, from the gospel of John, begins with light and newness!

This creative and amazing Spirit longs to birth and rebirth, over and again. It has been such a year hasn't it? Let's imagine for a minute that all of the lessons have been learnt from the history of our 2020



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year and we are now going in to a new year with all of that gained wisdom. But ultimately I guess we will dust ourselves off and breathe a sigh of relief and resettle ourselves in space not too far from where we have come. It is too easy to look for the normal and the familiar.

Missy Higgins wrote a song about it:

*"When the machine starts  
Will you remind me I saw the truth once  
I saw it floating in the air...."*

*Will I forget what it's like to be standing  
here looking up, drinking in the sky?*

.....

*When the lockdown ends  
And the speed is picking up  
Will you remind me darling  
What it felt like just to stop."*

Did we see the truth? Christ was in the world but we didn't know what to look for.... So we missed the signs! The Christ, the Word, became flesh and blood and dwelt here with us. Full of Grace and Truth. Grace is a theme in these readings. Grace means we get to do it over again, to start afresh. Jesus became grace, glorious grace, grace upon grace, the riches of grace, lavished on us. In my good moments I hold myself in the awareness of grace. Other times I need you to remind me, 'darling'! For it is amazing, is it not, that God has given insight and wisdom in sharing the mystery with us.

So how will God, the Christ, the Word, be born in Light and in Truth in your town this fresh and clean New Year?

God is 'incarnated' and 'enfleshed' and 'embodied' through you. Through us, as the church. I just love the way those images work together. The church is the body, the flesh and blood Word of God right here in the community. And together we share communion which is the flesh and blood of Christ. We say together "We remember...." as we take into ourselves the symbols of our belief. And the Holy Spirit is our seal and our place holder.

Imagine the most barren and uninspired place in the worst and most slummy area you know. That is where Christ is born. Imagine the most 'undeserving' and lowest circumstances you can think of. That is where Christ brings the grace of being and presence. Lavished. Rich, flowing and abundant grace.

***Responding:***

***Prayers for World & Community***

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We seek your grace O God  
for those who need the light of life.  
**Gather us and refresh us in your grace.**  
We know many who are struggling  
and we hold them in our hearts.  
Some are unable to see a future,  
some are feeling the trials of ageing,  
some the grief of loss and adjustment.  
**Gather us and refresh us in your grace.**

We pray for our children.  
Life is not easy for our young folk  
and their families.  
We think of the young people  
in our community

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and pray that they will find meaning  
and purpose in their lives.  
We pray for meaningful employment  
to give dignity to their lives.  
**Gather us and refresh us in your grace.**

The year just gone has reminded us  
that we are not in control:  
that we can't just go on hoping  
that our earth will replenish  
and take care of itself,  
We know that all things are connected.  
It seems so overwhelming  
but we have also learnt  
that even the least and most lost person  
is significant to the whole.  
**Gather us and refresh us in your grace.**

Walk with us through 2021  
and teach us how to be  
your flesh and blood,  
your body here in this place, at this time,  
your light in the darkness.

**May your kingdom come through us.**

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

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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.

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

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May the Peace of God dwell with you:  
**and also with you.**

### ***Offering***

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Extravagant God,  
just as the wise ones brought gifts to the  
baby Jesus, so we bring our gifts: time,  
energy, creativity, money, compassion,  
laughter and love. Use these gifts, and  
use us, to shine the light of Christ in the  
world, Amen.

### ***Notices***

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A new year - a new name! This is the first  
*Fig Tree Worship Resource*, following on  
from the worship materials created by the  
Shearwater Ministry Team from March to  
December in 2020. Worship leaders from  
across Gippsland are invited to contribute  
to this weekly offering, which will be  
available on the Presbytery website:  
<https://gippsland.unitingchurch.org.au/>  
If you would like it emailed to you directly  
please contact Jennie at  
[pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com](mailto:pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com)

### ***Singing - Wise Men came journeying***

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can be sung to BONNIE GEORGE CAMPBELL - TIS 624

Wise men came journeying, once,  
long ago,  
camel hooves swirling  
the sand dune and snow,  
gold in the saddlebag, myrrh in the jar,  
incense to honour the Child of the star.

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Wise are the travellers led to move on  
following signs  
where the Christ light has shone,  
facing the deserts and crossing the lines,  
heeding no limits that culture defines.

*Presbytery of Gippsland  
Editor: Rev. Jennie Gordon*



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Wise are each one of us  
looking for change,  
stargazer people, respecting the strange,  
inner and outer worlds open to light,  
centred on seeing the real and the right.

Today's contributions are from:  
Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson  
Rev. Jennie Gordon.

Wise ones keep journeying  
all through their days  
bringing their gifts  
to the source of their praise,  
risking the Promise  
with all they hold dear,  
seeking God's peace  
at the door of the year.

Words by Shirely Erena Murray © 1996 Hope Publishing  
Company, 380 S Main Pl, Carol Stream, IL 60188

### ***Blessing***

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Go and carry the light of Christ,  
wherever your feet take you  
on the journeys of this year.  
Know that you are deeply cherished,  
a beloved child of God,  
and live as if you believe it.

May the blessing of God,  
Source, Son and Spirit,  
rest on you and remain with you  
always,  
Amen.

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