



Sunday Jan 2nd , 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

We light the candle.

As a new year begins the light of Christ shines.
We may have particular hopes for what this year brings, but whatever happens through 2022, the light of Christ continues to shine.

Call to worship

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

The gospel of John begins not with a baby in a manger, but with a grounding of Christ the Word in the very nature of God.

Let us worship God.

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing - Lord your almighty word (TiS 447)

Lord, your almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight;
hear us, we humbly pray,
and, where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light.

Saviour who came to give
those who in darkness life
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
now to all humankind,
let there be light.

Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving holy Dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the waters' face
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place,
let there be light.

Holy and blessed Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might;
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide,
let there be light.

W: John Marriott, adapt. from Felice Giardini
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Prayer

God of wonder, God of light,
what an amazing journey you call us on.
We have not long imagined the wonderful
delight and hope that comes to us
in a newborn baby.

But however we may want to hold onto
that moment or others dear to us,
we are called to deepen our journey with you.

As we offer you our thanks and praise
we hear your word is uttered
and chaos and darkness take flight.
We are given rich insight into your close,
loving presence in a vulnerable baby,
and your glorious majesty known in creation.

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia
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Lord your almighty word,
chaos and darkness heard -
but all too often we are deaf
to your word,
to your wonder,
to your glory,
to your love.

When we lose sight of who you are,
we tend to become less than glorious
in our loving,
in our living.

Time to reflect

Hear the earnest longings of our hearts.
Where we struggle, forgive us.
Call us again to wonder.
Call us again to love.

As we wonder anew at the way you reach out and
restore us, we remember that in and through
Christ we are made whole,
thanks be to God. Amen.

Listening

Read: Ephesians 1:3-14 &
John 1:1-18

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

Reflecting - Rev. Moira Dodsworth

The Gospel does not allow for "normal"

In the lectionary readings, we move very quickly
from the stories and celebration of the birth of
Christ to the theological meaning, what is this
about? We are not allowed to stay in the story, to
enjoy those first few weeks of wonder in a baby
and the excitement that the arrival of a child
brings. Anyone who has brought home a baby
knows that the sleepless nights and reality of
caring for a baby bring hard and reality comes

quickly. Well, the lectionary gives us hard
theological work

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word
was with God and the Word was God. He was in
the beginning with God. We are thrown back to
Genesis, *In the beginning God* (Gen 1:1). God was
there first, is there first and will be there first.
That was God the Creator and now we have God
the Word. John tells us of the existence of the
word, the relationship of the word with God and
the identity of the word as God.[1] John is
introducing us to the incarnation, God is breaking
into history as a human, a male child and *the life
was the light of all People* (v4). Here is salvation,
life that darkness cannot overcome.

God comes closer, delivers the good news in
person, brings a message that many still fail to
hear and understand. It is all too easy to stay in
the Christmas story, the excitement of the baby,
the humanness, while forgetting the majesty and
power of God in creation. The Son and Father,
Redeemer and Creator are one. The concept of
creator when we look at the world around us can
become frightening, a creator who created not
only things of beauty and wonder but also
storms, snakes and mosquitoes. But the creator
does not leave us in the mystery, but comes as a
child to understand the world we see and feel, to
show us how to express love and compassion, to
show us that God understands.

Luke has told us over the past few weeks the
human story, the infant story, the reality of God
become human. John doesn't, John gives us a
vision of the difference Christ makes. We leap, in
the lectionary readings, from the story of the
nativity to the importance and meaning of the
incarnation. Here in these first eighteen verses of
John we really hear the gospel, the good news.
The Word became flesh and lived among us and
from his fullness, we have received grace upon
grace. (v14-16). Those who believe become
children of God.

As we begin 2022, we all hope for a better year.
As we tidy up after Christmas, perhaps enjoy



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holidays and reunions with families and friends we look for “normality”. However, if we think deeply on the meaning of the arrival of the Christ child, the breaking into history of God, that certainly isn’t “normal”. Christ came, fulfilling prophecies that told of normal being turned upside down. If we really take this to heart, we don’t look for the normal of last year or even 2019 but for God’s vision of a future that is a changed world. A world where love and compassion and justice are the ideals we hold as important. God, in mercy and grace, invites us to take part in this reversal of the normal so that all are loved and share the resources of this truly wonderful creation.

[1] New Interpreter’s Bible vol 9, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1995 p524

Responding: **Prayers for World & Community**

Lord, may your almighty word speak into places of chaos and darkness as we bring before you our prayers for the world.

For many, the season of joy is a season of heartache. Keeping peace in the face of fracture comes at a cost for many. We pray for all who feel unsafe within families. We pray for those who feel the sting of grief and loss while others appear to be joyous or carefree. We pray for communities who experience profound tragedy and for those who help towards recovery.

We pray for those isolated or lonely. We bring before you those who again face separation through challenges of the pandemic. We pray for those directly impacted by COVID-19, especially those who are unwell and those who have lost loved ones because of the virus.

For those who lead communities, states, countries and globally, we pray for wisdom in managing the challenges they and we face. May

the light of Christ shine wherever there is chaos or darkness.

We think of those close to us, our local community, our churches, our families. Bless those who shine your light and inspire us all to bear your light through the way we live.

We offer our own prayers in a time of silence.

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 the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Offering

God of light, bless the gifts we offer in your name,
that through these offerings and through our
living we may join your creative word to offer
light to the world.

Singing - Lord of the dance (TiS 242)

I danced in the morning
when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon
and the stars and the sun,
and I came down from heaven
and I danced on the earth:
at Bethlehem I had my birth.



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*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the dance, said he;
and I'll lead you all, where ever you may be,
and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.*

I danced for the scribe and the pharisee,
but they would not dance
and they wouldn't follow me.
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John -
they came with me and the dance went on.

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;
the holy people said it was a shame.
they whipped and they stripped
and they hung me high,
and they left me there on a cross to die.

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;
it's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
they buried my body and they thought I'd gone,
but I am the dance, and I still go on.

They cut me down and I leap up high;
I am the life that'll never, never die.
I'll live in you if you'll live in me;
I am the Lord of the dance,' said he,

W & M: Sydney Carter, adapt. from an American Shaker tune
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Blessing

Let there be light and
may that light be blessing to you.

Be blessed by the light
of God with us, Emmanuel.

Be blessed by the light
that speaks to chaos and darkness.

Be blessed by the light
of Christ that guides you.

The light cannot be hidden,
So go and be blessed,
Go and bless others.

In the name of the Creator,
Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.

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