

## Our song to sing or to read: This is All Our Joy

*Refrain:* Something we have known from the beginning  
That we have seen with our own eyes  
The world of life from whom all living takes its voice and cries  
This is all our joy in Christ

God is light, in God there is no darkness  
God is love, and if we live in God  
love will be our promise *Refrain*



See the love of God we have been given  
We are called God's children  
and in love that is who we are *Refrain*

Let us love for this is God's own being  
God in Christ has shown us how to love  
living for each other *Refrain*

*Music and Lyrics by Robyn Horner*

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## A Prayer

Go now and rejoice in the Lord always  
Do not be afraid or worried about anything  
but in everything, trust God and pray  
Bear fruits worthy of repentance  
sharing what you have and being gentle with all.

And may God rejoice over you with gladness  
May Christ Jesus renew you in his love  
and may the Holy Spirit give you peace beyond understanding  
to guard your hearts and minds in Christ.

Go with joy to love and serve the Lord  
Amen

*Nathan Nettleton 2002*

With thanks to Anne Vail and Raelene Burn for preparing today's reflection



Church in a Bag  
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Dubbo Uniting Church



## Gathering

As we pour water for our Advent wreath, we remember our deep thirst for  
God's **joy** (*Pour water into the first, second and third glasses*)

**Joy** which soaks into us and makes our world stand still  
like a sudden summer downpour

**Joy** which makes our soul dance like kids under a sprinkler on the lawn

**Joy** which becomes the centre of our life with others  
like the water boiling in the kettle for a cuppa with friends

We name aloud people and places  
in particular need of God's **joy** at  
this time

Advent God, we worship you with  
**joy**.

Amen



An Advent Song: In the Beginning

Here is the link:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnG6YQeDbao](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnG6YQeDbao)

## Preparation

We come to worship Christ, who proclaims good news to the poor  
binds up the broken-hearted, frees the prisoner  
and comforts those who mourn

We come to worship Christ, who gives a crown of beauty instead of ashes  
the oil of joy instead of mourning

and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair

We come to worship Christ, who rebuilds ancient ruins

and restores broken places

Rejoice in the Lord always!



Reading: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Reflection: How did John the Baptist's experience influence our perception of Jesus – Joy

In our reading today John tells those listening, “... he himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light” and that one much greater than him is coming. “The one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” What does knowing Jesus do for our lives?

**There is an acronym for JOY = Jesus, Others, You**

As we travel through Advent preparing for Christmas, Jesus is at the forefront of our minds, followed closely by all that He did for us all. This is the great news and great reason for us to have JOY this season.

**Happiness is not joy.** Happiness, we expect. Happiness, we can even plan for. Happiness occurs, more or less, where it should. It can be created, and we can control and manipulate it – a good relationship, a rewarding and satisfying job, a tasty meal, or a well-planned holiday.

Advertising tells us that happiness can be purchased, and they provide every way possible for us to do so. Self-help gurus tell us to “channel happy thoughts” and promote the benefits of our “positive thinking”.

Because good friends are the key to happiness, we are invited to surround ourselves with happy people in the hope that we will absorb their happiness by osmosis. Certain food makes us happy too, because food can evoke wonderful memories—times when we were happy, content, satisfied.



*Joy can't be manufactured, only happiness can.  
Joy is a relationship word.*

Happiness depends on the circumstances of our life. If my life follows the plan I have for it, and the things in my life happen the way I want them to happen, then I am happy. Happiness is a fleeting emotion that's under our control, but **joy** surprises us.



The words of the song, “This Joy” by Shirley Caesar say: “This joy that I have, the world didn’t give it, so the world can’t take it away”.

In this way, joy is otherworldly. It is a gift from God.

Joy is defined by our gratefulness. It's not that joy makes us grateful, it's that gratitude makes us joyful. Our joy springs up from our gratefulness. You can be a successful person, but if you take your success for granted, your success will not make you joyful. Joy is that extraordinary happiness that is independent of what happens to us. It is a way of seeing ourselves, not as we are, but as we are in Christ: being transformed in the presence of God.

Joy can't be manipulated because it is a gift from God and a product of our relationship and dependence on him. Joy is a relationship word.

We worship a loving Father who is ready to bless us in so many different ways.

As children of God, we have every reason to be joyful, but the heavy burdens of this life make it easy to forget that Joy. We experience joy when we surrender to God.

When we are open to God's will, when we orient ourselves fully towards him, and welcome his spirit, it is so much easier for him to work in our lives, to transform our hearts, and to surprise us with joy.

Remember that joy is a gift of the Spirit's work within us.