

## Our song to sing or to read: *What Glory This*

What glory this that angels sing  
to frightened shepherds in the night  
news of God's Son who comes to bring  
such peace as puts our fear to flight.

What glory this that dares be born  
into a suffering, broken world  
yet sees the wonder of the dawn  
and shows earth's beauty  
new unfurled?

What glory this that dares to cry  
and share in all our human pain?  
What glory that dares even die  
to make creation whole again?

This is the glory of our God  
who, with a love that knows no bounds  
intends to work till earth and heaven  
with glory, joy and praise abound.



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## A Blessing: *Go in Peace!*

Go in peace.  
May the love that made the stars  
be your guiding light.  
May the love revealed in Jesus  
be your hope and inspiration  
and may the love of the ever-present Spirit  
give you courage, joy and hope  
now and forever.  
Amen.

With thanks to Rev Simon Hansford for preparing today's reflection



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## Gathering

Look! Here is the fullness of God  
revealed in a tiny child.

Look! Here is the wonder of God  
declared in simplicity.

Look! Here is the mercy of God  
entrusting us with Jesus.

Look! Here is the promise of God  
never distant, always with us.

## Preparation

Child in the manger, infant of Mary  
you have come and made our home your home.  
So no more far away, but here and now  
with us and within us;  
listening, healing, mending  
teaching, suffering and forgiving.

A fragile child in a frightening world  
while shepherds listen and wonder.  
An innocent child in a hostile world  
and wise men bring their presents.  
A rejected child in a dangerous world  
where only some want to kneel  
and some give you the gift of themselves.

But we will welcome you warmly  
and cuddle you snugly and keep you safe.  
We will hold you dearly  
when we see you; when we hear you;



when we find you in our midst  
in the tears of the grieving ones  
in the laughter of the delighted ones  
in the silence of the fearful ones  
in the pain of those who need your company  
in the pain which belongs to ourselves.

And so, we feel for you now  
in the secret and personal parts of our lives  
that only we know, and you know  
in our thinking and dreaming and hoping  
in our regrets and aspirations  
and in our best imaginings too.

Immanuel: God-with-us  
patiently waiting to be acknowledged  
desperate to share with us your peace.

Thanks be to God.

His light is in the world: the light that never dies  
the meaning that gives our being  
all purpose and reason.

Amen

### Readings Old Testament: Isaiah 9:2-7

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

### Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

*"... to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,  
who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you:  
you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."*

### Reflection

As if the last twelve months were not sufficient for all of us. At this time last year, the horror of the bushfires was bursting from the scarifying drought. It's not enough that we have struggled with, then adapted to,



COVID-19 and its consequences; I am writing this while the US Presidential election is being wrestled to an almighty conclusion. Into this storm of a year, comes the murmur of God. As it was then, so it is.

However, we have worked diligently to airbrush the story of Jesus' birth. We have tidied Mary's exhaustion and Joseph's worry, minimised their shared fear, born under foreign soldiers, into harmonised carols and a sanitised stable.

It is far more appropriate that we acknowledge the difficulty and struggle at that first Christmas, because it makes sense for us now.

Needful of hope, we speak of *Emmanuel, God with us*; but a God who is born in sterile conditions, or in rarefied accommodation has no idea of us nor of the lives we lead.

Last year, I led Christmas worship at Dandaloo, standing with farming families in the drought's dust, shrouded in smoke from the coastal fires. As the year turned, people crowded in fear on beaches, hiding from the flames. Since the advent of COVID-19, families have visited their elders, wreathed in medical gear, or tapping on windows and laptop screens.

When Jesus is born into times such as these, we touch the mercy of God.

We have acted to save each other by remaining physically distant. At Christmas, Jesus does precisely the opposite; God comes close.

The frailty of this tiny baby is the frailty of God. Our weaknesses, our struggles, our fears are known to God and embraced.

This is why the angels sing; God with us is God leading us to life. When Jesus is born into those days – and these – we are embraced by the love of God.

Dare we take the risk of embracing this wonderful, fragile gift and discover what salvation truly and deeply means?