**Times and Seasons**

**Part 1 - Advent to the Presentation of Christ**

**Section 3**

**Christmas**

**Introduction to the Season**

*'Nails, spear shall pierce him through,*

*the cross be borne for me, for you;*

*Hail, hail the Word made flesh,*

*the babe, the son of Mary.'*

*('What Child is This' by William Chatterton Dix)*

*Christmas ranks as next in importance to the paschal (Easter) mystery. However, the paschal mystery is not just simply the most important time of the church's year it also gives meaning to and interprets all the other feasts of our times and seasons. Christmas, then, is when we see and celebrate the Lord's paschal mystery shining through the events of the incarnation, birth and childhood of Jesus. The child which is born is the one to save his people from their sins, the one to bring peace on earth.*

*From the first moments of Jesus' birth, in fact in the preparatory events before his birth and even before his conception, we see, in flesh and blood, the redeeming love of God that will be fully revealed on the cross. At Christmas, we are celebrating a mystery and not simply an historical event or anniversary of a birthday. The mystery we celebrate is the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Word made flesh, Emmanuel, 'God with us,' the whole humanity of Jesus, from birth to death, from cross to cradle, from feeding trough to upper room, from swaddling clothes to shroud, from the town of the shepherd David's boyhood in Bethlehem to the seat of his throne and rule in the City of Jerusalem, where Christ's redeeming death, resurrection, ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit complete his saving work*

*The high point of the Church's celebration of Christmas is the First Eucharist usually celebrated at Midnight. Material for this is provided in the Holy Eucharist (2004) and the Collects and Revised Common Lectionary of the Church in Wales. Additional and supplementary material for the Eucharist is provided here which relates to different choices of Scripture readings.*

 *The Christmas Crib and Tree may remain in church until the feast of the Presentation of the Lord (2nd February) reflecting the fullness of the Christmas season, continuing from Epiphany to Candlemas for a full forty days. At the feast of the Epiphany the figures of the shepherds may be removed and replaced with the figures of the Magi.*

*A variety of additional Christmas celebrations and liturgical material is provided here, including a Christingle Service, Nine Lessons and Carols, the Blessing of the Crib and Christmas Tree; there is also additional material for use throughout the Christmas season which may be incorporated into various celebrations.*

Celebrating the Eucharist

at Christmas

***Blessing of the Crib***

*The Crib may be blessed (if it has not been blessed at an earlier celebration) at the*

*beginning of the Eucharist. See the suggestions and prayers of blessing on page 39*

***Greeting***

*Either the greeting from Holy Eucharist 2004 or the following may be used:*

The light of Christ, who is our peace and salvation, be with you all.

**And also with you.**

***Prayers of Penitence***

*An Introduction to Confession*

Turning to Christ, the Light,

who has dispelled the darkness of our world,

let us rejoice in his power to save.

*Either the following sentences from Holy Eucharist 2004 may be used:*

Lord Jesus, you are mighty God and Prince of peace.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are Son of God and Son of Mary.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are Word made flesh and splendour of the Father.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

*Or:*

Lord Jesus, you are the eternal Word of God,

begotten of the Father before time began.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, we have seen your glory,

the glory that is yours as the only Son of the Father.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, of your fullness we have all received,

grace in return for grace.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

*The Gloria is sung*

***Gospel Acclamation***

*Proper I*

Alleluia, alleluia!

I bring you news of great joy:

today a Saviour has been born for us, Christ the Lord.

Alleluia!

*Proper II*

Alleluia, alleluia!

Glory to God in the highest

and peace to all who enjoy his favour.

Alleluia!

*Proper III*

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Word was made flesh and lived among us

and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father.

Alleluia!

***Intercessions***

*The following or other suitable Prayers of Intercession may be used*

**Set I**

*Invitation to Prayer*

(On this holy night/day) as we celebrate the birth that brings grace and salvation to all, let us place before God our needs and those of the whole world.

# *Petitions*

For the church here and throughout the world (especially *N.* our bishop), that our worship and praise may give glory to God, and our witness and ministry promote peace on earth, let us pray:

 Glory to God in the highest,

 **and peace to his people on earth**.

For people of every race and nation, that the celebration of the birth of the Prince of Peace may increase their joy and encourage a new birth of righteousness and justice, let us pray: ***R.***

For those who walk in the darkness of despair and the shadow of injustice, that the power of God and the faith of his holy people may break the rod of oppression and lift the yoke of life’s burdens, let us pray: ***R.***

For refugees and asylum seekers, for those who are homeless, and parents who struggle alone, that we may see in them the image of Mary and Joseph, and recognise the face of Christ, let us pray: ***R.***

For family and friends near and far, for the hospitalized and housebound and those who are ill: that the good news of great joy which fills our lives may brighten the hearts of all people, let us pray: ***R.***

For ourselves, that by the grace of Christ we may give up all that does not lead to God and that, living good and holy lives, we may bear witness to our hope for the Saviour’s glorious return, let us pray: ***R.***

For those who have died in Christ: that the Saviour whose appearing they longed for may gladden them with the vision of heaven’s glory, let us pray: ***R.***

In silence and peace, let us offer our own prayers to God our loving Father.

# *Concluding Prayer*

Glory to you, Lord God! In the birth of your Son in Bethlehem, you bring joy and peace to the world. May all for whom we have prayed, and all people throughout the world, be filled with the joy of your presence and know your peace in their lives. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Set II***

*Invitation to Prayer*

As we treasure all that has happened and ponder on the Mystery of Christ's birth, we call on the compassion of God who has revealed his love for the whole of humanity through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

*Petitions*

We rejoice in the angels' message and praise you with heavenly song:

may the lives of all people be filled with faith in Christ.

***R.*** God of compassion and love:

 **raise our hopes to heaven.**

The shepherds made haste to see all that had happened:

may your promises be fulfilled in the lives of the lowly. ***R.***

We have seen your Son, a sign of peace for all:

give us a longing for your peace and a love of your kingdom. ***R.***

We glorify and praise you for all we have heard and seen:

make us eager to share the good news of Christ's birth. ***R.***

We treasure the mystery of our Saviour's birth:

may our prayer and worship raise our hearts and lives to heaven. ***R.***

We praise you for all that is revealed in the city of David:

may our homes and families be filled with the light of Christ. ***R.***

God our Father,

the compassion and love you have for the whole human race

is now revealed through the birth of your Son in Bethlehem.

As heaven and earth are united in song

may the message received by lowly shepherds

raise our hopes to heaven,

that we may look forward to the fullness of eternal life;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Or:*

Almighty God and Father,

as a baby's cry breaks the silence of the night

may his infant presence bring the promise of peace

and proclaim salvation for all people.

where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Set III***

# *Invitation to Prayer*

As Christmas fills the earth with the good news of the Word made flesh,

let our prayers embrace the needs of all God’s children.

# *Petitions*

For the church’s ministry throughout the world, that by our works of love we may serve the Word made flesh who has come to live among us, let us pray to the Lord:

 All the ends of the earth shall see:

 **the salvation of our God.**

For international efforts towards peace and stability, that all nations may gladly welcome those who bring the message of peace, let us pray to the Lord: ***R.***

For the homeless, the unemployed, the lonely and bereaved and all for whom Christmas is a difficult time, that Christians may be for them the bringer of Christ’s light and life, let us pray to the Lord: ***R.***

For families reunited by this holy season, for homes brightened by children, and for hearts filled with the joy of friendship, that all may bless God who comforts and sustains us with the gifts of his love, let us pray to the Lord: ***R.***

For friends and strangers, one community gathered in this place, that we may see and cherish one another in Christ, the radiant light of God's glory, let us pray to the Lord: ***R.***

[For our beloved departed who accepted and believed in Christ, that they may see Christ now in the fullness of the Father’s glory, let us pray to the Lord: ***R.]***

In silence and peace, let us offer our own prayers to God our loving Father.

# *Concluding Prayer*

Glory to you, Lord God!

In the birth of your Son in Bethlehem,

you bring joy and peace to the world.

May all for whom we pray, and all people throughout the world,

be filled with the joy of your presence

and know your peace in their lives.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Preface***

Today a new light has dawned upon us.

The song of angels fills the skies

proclaiming news of joy

and peace to all on earth;

for Christ your Son before all time

is born into this world.

He restores our dignity,

enriches our worth

and brings to us the gift of eternal life

for as he lived among us

we too may experience the joy of life with you for ever.

***Introduction to the Lord's Prayer***

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us,

as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

***Blessing and Dismissal***

Christ, who by taking our flesh, gathered into one all

things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and

peace …

*Or*

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary, fill you with his

grace to trust his promises and obey his will …

*Or*

God the Father,

who reigns in highest heaven,

bring you the grace and truth of the Word made flesh. **Amen.**

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,

fill you with his grace

to trust his promises and obey his will. **Amen.**

God the Holy Spirit,

by whose power Mary conceived,

dwell in your hearts in love. **Amen.**

And the blessing …

*Either:*

Rejoicing in Emmanuel, God-with-us,

go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

*Or:*

Rejoicing in the Word made flesh

go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Blessing of the Christmas Tree

The use of the Christmas Tree is relatively modern but its origins may be found in the medieval mystery plays which depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle symbolizing Christ, the Light of the World. The Christmas Tree may be blessed on or before Christmas during a celebration of the Word of God, or during Morning and Evening Prayer (after the gospel canticle) or during the first Eucharist of Christmas, and may remain in church until Epiphany or the Presentation of the Lord.

My brothers and sisters, in Bethlehem, the city of David, Jesus Christ was born: his birth fulfils our longing, fills our hearts with joy and enlightens our minds. May this tree help us to welcome Christ among us; may its gentle light guide us to the perfect light.

Lord our God,

we praise you for creation’s light:

for the high sun rising in the sky and warming the earth,

and the moon and stars that brighten the darkest night.

We praise you for Jesus Christ your Son:

the Light of the World,

who warms our hearts and illuminates our minds

and filling us with the wonder of your love.

Let your blessing come upon us

as we light up this tree.

May its glimmering light and warming cheer

be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.

May all who delight in this tree

come to the knowledge of joy and salvation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The candles or lights of the tree are then illuminated.*

#### Blessing of a Christmas Crib

#### or Nativity Scene

The custom of depicting the scene of Christ’s birth owes it origins to St Francis of Assisi who made the Christmas Manger for Christmas Eve1223. However, as early as the fourth century the nativity scene has been depicted on wall decorations, including not only the infancy narrative accounts of Christ’s birth but also the words of the prophets Isaiah and Habbaku illustrating that the Messiah would be born in the midst of animals in a manger.

The blessing of the Christmas Manger may take place on Christmas Eve or on another appropriate occasion. These prayers may also be used and adapted for the blessing of a Nativity scene at home.

***Greeting***

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Son of God and Son of Mary, be with you all.

**And also with you.**

***Introduction***

Dear friends, as we meet to celebrate the birth of Christ, let us pray that God will bless this crib, that all who worship his Son, born of the Virgin Mary, may come to share his life in glory.

*Either:*

Loving Father,

when darkness lay across the land

your Word leaped down from heaven.

Born in Royal David’s City,

his infant cry draws our hearts and minds to the joy of your eternal love,

cradled in the arms of Mary.

Bless us and all who gaze upon this Crib.

With minds alert to the birth of Christ

and hearts warmed by his coming,

may he be born in our hearts this day.

May we experience the wonder of your love

and the splendour of your Word made flesh,

cradled in our lives.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Or:*

The unfolding of your love, O God,

is glimpsed in David’s town

through the birth of Christ your Son.

Surrounded by a mother’s love,

the infant child of Bethlehem

is greeted as the One to bring peace to all on earth.

The sky is filled with angels' song,

and shepherds leave their hilltop home

to see all that has been made known to them.

Bless us and all who gaze upon this Crib

that, rejoicing in the birth of Christ

and filled with awe and wonder,

our hearts may overflow with love

and our whole lives echo with the sound of Heaven’s song.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,

the Word made flesh,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

A Blessing of the Crib Service

and Christmas Vigil in the context of the Holy Eucharist

*After the Creed, the figures of the crib may be presented and placed in the stable scene. The following words may be used (or a carol or suitable song be sung)*

***Introduction***

Dear friends, as we meet to celebrate the birth of Christ, let us pray that God will bless this crib, that all who worship his Son, born of the Virgin Mary, may come to share his life in glory.

***Figures of Cattle***

*'An ox knows its owner and a donkey its master's stall; but Israel lacks all knowledge, my*

*people has no discernment.' (Isaiah 1:3)*

Jesus is laid in a feeding trough amongst the animals.

 May all people discern his presence,

 for he is the Bread of Life who has come into the world. ***R.***

***Mary***

*A young woman is with child and she will give birth to a son and call him Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14)*

The pain of Jesus' birth gives way to joy as Mary delights in the child in her arms. May we delight in the presence of Jesus, who is Emmanuel, God-with-us, and who brings peace to all on earth.

***R.*** Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened:

 **which the Lord has made known to us.**

***Joseph***

*When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.' (Matthew 1:24)*

Joseph's faith is tested but he remains firm and loving. He accepts God's plan for the world and takes into his care the Son of God and Son of Mary.

May we be loving and accepting of the presence of Jesus in our lives. ***R.***

***Shepherds***

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' (Luke 2:15)*

The shepherds rejoiced and rushed to the place where Jesus lay, the angels' song resounding in their hearts and filling their lives with light and love.

May we eagerly make our way to welcome Christ with joy that, having seen his glory, we may proclaim with one voice, 'Glory to God in the highest.' ***R.***

***Jesus***

We welcome you Lord Jesus,

born of Mary in Bethlehem's royal town:

you are the giver of peace to all on earth,

the Saviour of the world,

the healer of the broken hearted,

the joy of all who hope in God.

We give glory to God in the highest

and proclaim to all people the good news of your birth

and the joy of your presence among us,

for you are Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Prayer of Blessing***

*One of the prayers in the previous section for the Blessing of a Christmas Crib or Nativity Scene may be used.*

***Intercessions***

*The following or other similar prayers may be used.*

*Invitation to Prayer*

As we have gathered (to create and) delight in this crib. let us pray for God's blessing upon us and all who will gaze upon this scene, that his saving love will shine in our lives and be a beacon for those who are longing for light.

*Petitions*

Let us pray for the Church of God: as we recall the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem may our hearts be filled with joy and praise.

 ***R.*** This day new light will shine upon the earth:

 **The Lord is born for us.**

Let us pray for our own parish community: that the love of Jesus may dwell in our hearts so that we may turn to one another with encouragement and support. ***R.***

Let us pray for the world in which we live: that all people may recognise Christ whose humble birth was hailed by angels' song and seen by lowly shepherds. ***R.***

Let us pray for our families and homes: that Christ, who was laid in the manger, may dwell with us always. ***R.***

Let us pray for all parents: that the love of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Joseph may inspire and guide all who have the care of children. **R.**

Let us pray for those who are turned away: may the Church provide a welcome for all who come in the name of the Lord and be eager to help them see all that has happened. ***R.***

Let us pray for those who have no house or home: for the homeless of our towns and cities, for refugees and those who seek asylum in foreign lands. ***R.***

*Concluding Prayer*

God our Father, the sight of your Son in a bed of straw

gives peace and joy to all who hear his newborn cries.

Listen to the prayers we make in his name

and fill the world with love,

for he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*The Eucharist continues with the peace.*

*If the The Eucharist is not celebrated then the Liturgy ends with the Lord's prayer and an appropriate blessing.*

Additional Material

for use throughout the Christmas Season.

*These prayers may be used for private or public devotion throughout the Christmas Season*

Almighty God,

born in David's town, Jesus your Son, the promised Messiah,

has come into the world to bring unity to the whole of creation

and gather the whole of humanity into your kingdom of light and peace.

As we worship with poor shepherds,

the song of angels echoes in our ears,

and fills our hearts with hymns of praise.

May our prayer for peace bear fruit in the lives of all people

that the whole world may resound with your love.

We make our prayer through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Glory to you Lord God,

almighty God and Father,

we give you thanks and praise you for your glory

and rejoice in the birth of your incarnate Son.

Cradled in a manger he sustains the world with his love

and nourishes us with the gift of himself,

for he is the Bread of Life, who has come down from heaven

to live in the midst of his people.

Open our hearts to his presence in our lives

and send us out to share the good news of salvation he brings.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord God,

you bless the world with the gift of your Son,

who fills the world with light and life.

As we rejoice in the mystery of his birth,

may the song of angels and the worship of the shepherds,

the love of Mary and the dedication of Joseph,

bring us closer to the knowledge of our Saviour's love

and help us discern his presence in our lives,

for he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

All powerful God and Father,

the royal town of David, the lowly shepherd king,

is filled with promises of the Messiah's birth,

and yet there is no room for our Saviour.

When his newborn cries break the silence of the dark night,

the brightness of our God dawns across the earth

and fills the heavenly messengers with songs of joy

bringing news of peace to shepherds watching in the night.

Making haste from their hilltop home they see their Saviour laid in straw,

and speak in wondrous ways about the promises fulfilled.

May the joy and peace of Jesus' birth

illuminate the darkness threatening the earth

and gather young and old to marvel at the mystery of our Incarnate God.

May our living space be filled with Jesus' presence

and provide a wondrous welcome for the King and Shepherd of us all,

your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with and the Holy Spirit,

one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Prayers for use with children***

Lord Jesus,

thank you for coming into the world

and showing us how to live.

We pray for all the children of the world.

Help them to find their way to you

and know happiness and peace in their lives. **Amen.**

Lord Jesus,

we bring our lives to you.

Please help us to follow you

and to share with others the good news

of your birth in Bethlehem. **Amen.**

God our Father,

the birth of Jesus makes us happy.

Help us share our happiness with others

and to live as your children in the world.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**.

***A Litany based on Wisdom 7:1-6***

'I too am mortal like everyone else,

a descendant of the first man formed from the earth.'

**Lord Jesus, Son of Adam and Son of David, have mercy on us.**

'I was modelled in flesh inside a mother's womb,

where in blood I acquired substance.'

**Jesus, Son of David and Son of Mary, have mercy on us**

'I, too, when I was born drew in the common air,

I fell on the same ground that bears us all,

and crying was the first sound I made, like everyone else.'

**Lord Jesus, Son of Mary and Son of God, have mercy on us.**

'I was nurtured in swaddling clothes, with every care.

No other king has known any other beginning of existence;

for there is only one way into life, and one way out of it.'

**Lord Jesus, Word made flesh and splendour of the Father,**

**have mercy on us.**

'And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes

and lying in a manger.' *(Luke 2: 12)*

**Glory to God in the highest heaven**

**and on earth peace for all those he favours.**

***A Litany of the Incarnation (Based on Luke 1:26-38)***

'The angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin named Mary.'

**Let what you have said be done to me.**

**(**O*r:* **Be it unto me according to your word.)**

'Rejoice highly favoured, the Lord is with you.'

**Let what you have said be done to me.**

'You are to conceive a bear a son and you must name him Jesus.'

**Let what you have said be done to me.**

'He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High

and his reign will have no end.'

**Let what you have said be done to me.**

'The Holy Spirit will come upon you

and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow.'

**Let what you have said be done to me.**

'The child will be called holy and will be called Son of God.'

**Let what you have said be done to me.**

'Nothing is impossible with God.'

**Let what you have said be done to me**

'I am the servant of the Lord.'

**Let what you have said be done to me.**

Lord, pour your grace into our hearts.

As we have known the incarnation of your Son through an angel's message

so through his cross and passion

we may experience the joy of his resurrection.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***A Litany of the Word made Flesh***

In the beginning God created heaven and earth:

the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep.

God said, 'Let there be light.'

**And there was light.**

God said, 'Let us make humankind in our own image.'

In the image of God he created humanity, male and female he created them.

God said, 'Let there be light.'

**And there was light.**

In the beginning was the Word:

the Word was with God and the Word was God.

God said, 'Let there be light.'

**And there was light.**

All that came to be had life in him:

a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower.

God said, 'Let there be light'

**And there was light.**

The Word was the true light that enlightens all people.

He was coming into the world and the world did not know him.

God said, 'Let there be light'

**And there was light.**

The Word was made flesh and lived among us:

We saw his glory as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

God said, 'Let there be light'

**And there was light.**

God of Light,

your all-powerful Word leaps down from heaven

to take flesh and live among his people.

May the light of his coming illuminate the darkness of the earth

and create in all people a longing for his presence

so that, filled with grace and truth, we may worship you:

one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

***'We Welcome you, Lord Jesus'***

We welcome you, Lord Jesus,

as the true Light of the world.

**(R. Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth)**

We welcome you, Lord Jesus,

as the Promise of the Father. ***R.***

We welcome you, Lord Jesus,

as the Word made flesh. ***R.***

We welcome you, Lord Jesus,

as the promised Messiah. ***R.***

We welcome you, Lord Jesus,

as Emmanuel, God with us. ***R.***

We welcome you, Lord Jesus,

as Saviour and King. ***R.***

We welcome you, Lord Jesus,

as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. ***R.***

We welcome you, Lord Jesus,

as the Holy One. ***R.***

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most Hight,

Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit,

in the glory of God the Father. **Amen.**

***'Do not be Afraid'***

Dear friends, at this time, when God revealed his plan through heavenly messengers whose presence filled those they greeted with trepidation and fear, let us rejoice in the saving presence of Jesus, our Lord and our God. He has come to live among us as Emmanuel, 'God with us.' He casts out fear, brings us peace and humbles earthly pride so that with angels and archangels we may join the heavenly voices to worship Christ our God.

'Do not be afraid, your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear a son and you shall name him John. He will be your joy and delight... and he will bring back many of the Israelites to the Lord their God.' *(Luke1:13 -14.16)*

 Do not be afraid:

 **God is with us.**

'Do not be afraid, you have won God's favour. You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High.'*(Luke 1:30 - 32b)*

 Do not be afraid:

 **God is with us.**

'Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' *(Matthew 1:20b -21)*

 Do not be afraid:

 **God is with us.**

'Do not be afraid I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people.' Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.' *(Luke 2:10-11)*

 Do not be afraid:

 **God is with us.**

Almighty God and Father,

heaven and earth are united through the birth of Christ your Son.

May the message of the angels

resound with radiance in our hearts

and hasten us to see all that you are doing in the world.

Bring peace to all your people,

calm our fears

and strengthen our faith to follow your way

and accept with joy your plan for the world

in the dawning brightness of our Saviour's birth.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***'Whilst we were busy'***

Whilst we were busy labouring and working

and making our mark upon the earth,

you slipped into our presence

almost unnoticed.

**R.** Unto us a child is born

 **unto us a Son is given.**

Whilst we were busy seeking the pleasures of life

and paying no attention to prayer,

you slipped into our presence

almost unheard. ***(R.)***

Whilst we were busy pulling our little lives apart

and parting from friends and loved ones,

you slipped into our presence

almost unknown. ***(R.)***

Whilst we were busy looking above for signs and wonders

and waiting for something divine,

you slipped into our presence

almost unseen. ***(R.)***

Whilst we were busy taking about religious things

and being important and powerful,

you slipped into our presence

almost unrecognised. ***(R.)***

Whilst we were busy seeking after something more

and storing up treasures and riches,

you slipped into our presence

almost unwanted. ***(R.)***

God of the weak and the lowly,

Lord of the lost and the poor,

we have been too distracted by other things

to pay much attention to your presence.

Remove the things that hinder us from glimpsing your glory,

and draw us closer to you and one another

that, pondering your Word and treasuring your love,

we may know the One you have given to us,

and the truth of the child who lies in the arms of Mary,

your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Prayer after Communion***

God our Father,

filled with awe and wonder

we have feasted at the table of your Son,

who, at his birth in Bethlehem was cradled in a feeding trough,

and feeds the world with the gift of himself.

May the gifts we have received at his table

strengthen and sustain us

that, filled with the good news of salvation and peace for all on earth,

we will proclaim his presence to the whole human race

through lives marked by holiness and love.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God our Father,

we praise you for all we have seen and heard,

for all we have received at the table of your Son.

Strengthen us to share the good news of his birth

and rejoice in the grace which make us heirs with him

to look forward with faith to the fullness of eternal life;

through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty God,

the light that shines in the darkness

has filled our lives, dispelled the shadows of the night

and filled us with his grace and truth.

May we, who rejoice in the Word made flesh

and who have welcomed him into our midst,

proclaim good news, be heralds of peace, and bring happiness to others.

We raise our voices and shout for joy together,

for we have seen our King who consoles his people

and brings salvation to the whole human race.

Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Service of Carols and Readings for Christmas

*The Service of Nine Lessons with Carols was first drawn up by Edward Benson when*

*Bishop of Truro for use in his cathedral. It was simplified and adapted for use in the chapel*

*of King’s College, Cambridge, in 1918 by the Dean, Eric Milner-White, who wrote the*

*first Introduction and Bidding Prayer provided below.*

*The versicles and responses for Evening Prayer may be used here*

***Introduction I***

Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmastide our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger. Therefore let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious redemption brought us by this Holy Child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all his people; for unity and brotherhood within the Church he came to build, and especially in this city [*town, village*] of … and diocese of … And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one. These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the

words which Christ himself hath taught us:

***Our Father...***

***Introduction II***

My brothers and sisters, the feast of Christmas fills the world with joy and delight, with light and life, as we rejoice in the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Gathered in his presence, let us listen to the words of Scripture and treasure these things in our heart, pondering upon all that God has done for us in Christ. May the message of the angels fill our hearts with joy and may the Spirit of God, who overshadowed Mary, strengthen our faith that we too, having journeyed in heart and mind to the city of David, may announce to all people the awe inspiring love of the Father and give glory to God in the highest!

Come now, in mind and spirit, to the humble home in Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. Listen to the angels' message, their song filled with good news and peace for all on earth. Come and rejoice with the lowly shepherds and share in the joy of Mary as we gaze upon Christ who has been born into this world to bring salvation to all. As we rejoice, let us never forget the needs of others, for Jesus comes to the poor and downtrodden, the overlooked and undermined, the hungry and the homeless with peace and he ministers with grace and love. Let us pray for them and be resolved, through acts of charity and love, to bring them the good news of Jesus' birth and the assurance of his love.

Let us pray for reconciliation and peace throughout the world, for freedom from sin and the powers of darkness. Welcoming the light of Christ, let us open our hearts and lives to our heavenly Father, seeking his will in all things, praying as Jesus himself has taught us:

***Our Father...***

***Pattern of Readings I*** *(Pattern from King's College, Cambridge)*

Genesis 3.8-14 The Fall

Genesis 22.1-19 The promise to Abraham

*(or 22.15-18)*

Isaiah 9.2,6,7 The prophecy of the Messiah’s birth

Isaiah 11.1-9 The prophecy of the Messiah’s kingdom of peace

*(or Micah 5.2-4 The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem)*

Luke 1.26-38 The Annunciation to Mary

*(or Isaiah 60.1-6,19 The coming of the glory of the Lord)*

Matthew 1.18-23 The birth of Emmanuel

*(or Luke 2.1-7 The birth of Jesus)*

Luke 2.8-16 The shepherds go to the manger

Matthew 2.1-11 The magi are led by the star to Jesus

John 1.1-14 The Incarnation of the Word of God

***Pattern of Readings II*** *(The Gospel according to Luke)*

Luke 1.5-25 The Annunciation to Zechariah

Luke 1.26-38 The Annunciation to Mary

Luke 1.39-56 The visit of Mary to Elizabeth

Luke 1.57-80 The birth of John

Luke 2.1-7 The birth of Jesus

Luke 2.8-20 The shepherds

Luke 2.22-40 The Presentation in the Temple

Titus 2.11-14; 3.3-7 The Grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all

***Pattern of Readings III*** *(Good News for the Poor)*

Micah 5.2-4 Bethlehem, from you shall come forth a ruler

Isaiah 35 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad

Haggai 2.5b-9 I will fill this house with splendour

*(or Jeremiah 22.13-16; 23.5,6*

 *Your Father judged the cause of the poor)*

Isaiah 11.1-9 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse

Isaiah 52.7-10 How beautiful on the mountains

*(or Isaiah 40.1-11 A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord)*

Philippians 2.5-11 He took the form of a servant

Gospel

*In Advent:*

Luke 1.26-38 The Annunciation

*At Christmas:*

Luke 2.1-20 The birth of Jesus

***Final Prayer and Blessing***

*The following or some other appropriate prayer may be used:*

God our Father,

we have listened attentively

to the eager longing of your people

and the fulfilment of their hopes in the birth of Jesus.

As we rejoice in the salvation his birth announces

may the mystery of the Word made flesh

illuminate our lives and raise us high to heaven,

where he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*The blessing and dismissal from Daily Prayer, p. 85 or from the Order of the Holy Eucharist may be used here.*

Christingle Service

*The following is offered as a suggested outline for a Christingle Service to accompany and supplement other material already widely available. The language used is as simple as possible to cater for the large number of children that is usually present at this kind of service and for whom this service is primarily aimed. Suitable carols and hymns should be chosen.*

***Gathering***

*A hymn or carol may be sung*

***Greeting***

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

May the peace and light of Jesus our King be with you all.

**And also with you.**

*The following Acclamation may be also be used:*

Shepherds hear the angel's message:

**The glory of the Lord shines round!**

Today in David's town a saviour has been born:

**the glory of the Lord shines round!**

A baby wrapped in swaddling clothes is the sign they have been given:

**The glory of the Lord shines round!**

They hurry to the place where Jesus Christ is laid:

**The glory of the Lord shines round!**

The shepherds astound others with all they have been told.

**The glory of the Lord shines round!**

Mary treasures all these things and ponders them in her heart:

**The glory of the Lord shines round!**

Let us see this thing that has happened, the things the Lord has said:

**The glory of the Lord shines round!**

For Jesus Christ our Saviour has been born in David's town:

**The glory of the Lord shines round!**

***Words of Introduction***

Dear friends, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem brightens our lives, brings us happiness and promises peace to the whole world. As we celebrate this Christingle service we pray that the love of God which has come into the world will fill the lives of all people and that his glory will shine around.

***Introduction to the Prayers of Penitence (‘Prayers to Say Sorry’)***

We want to follow Jesus with all our heart but sometimes we make mistakes and make him sad. So, let's think about the things that have spoiled our friendship with Jesus, and ask that he will make us strong and faithful.

***Prayers of Penitence ('Prayers to say Sorry')***

*Either:*

Lord Jesus, you were born in poverty.

Enrich us with your love.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you were greeted by lowly shepherds.

Raise us up to be good and holy.

Christ, have mercy.  **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you were laid in a manger.

Help us to see you in our daily lives.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

*Or:*

**God our Father,**

**you are always kind and forgiving.**

**We are sorry for all the things we have done**

**to spoil our friendship with Jesus.**

**Let his light shine in our lives**

**and help us to love others**

**as he loves us. Amen.**

***Prayer of Forgiveness.***

May the love of Jesus, which shines out for all the world to see,

take root in your/our hearts,

strengthen you/us to do good things

and to share his peace with others,

for he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Prayer***

Lord God,

your word is a lantern to our feet

lighting up our path through life.

Help us to listen the words we are about to hear,

that the light of Jesus' birth

may shine in our lives

and bring peace to all on earth.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Readings***

*Suitable readings from the Bible should be chosen which will tell the story of Jesus' birth*

***Homily***

***Distribution and Lighting of the Christingles***

*A carol or other appropriate hymn or song may be sung as the Christingles are lit.*

*The Christingles may be lit after they have been distributed to the children, when they have returned to their place, according to local circumstances and as is safe and appropriate.*

***A Christingle Prayer***

God our Father,

the glow of the candle we hold in our hands

is the glow of Jesus the Lord:

by coming into the world

he lights up our lives,

warms our hearts

and brings happiness to the lives of all people.

Through our friendship with him

may others come to know his undying love.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Prayers***

*Two sets of prayers are given here: prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of intercession. They may be combined or other appropriate prayers may be used.*

***Prayers of Thanksgiving ('Thank you Prayers')***

Dear friends, God is so powerful and so loving. He has given us so many things that our hearts must be bursting with happiness. Let's say thank you to God who loved the world so much that he gave us Jesus his Son.

We thank you, God, for the world you have created and the wonders of the universe. We say together: **Thank you God our Father.**

We thank you, God, for all the people over many years who have followed you and shown us how to serve you. We say together...

We thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus who has come into our world to show us how to live and love. We say together...

We thank you, God, for the chance to share your love with those who are in need. We say together...

We thank you, God, for all the lovely things we have been given in our lives. We say together...

We thank you, God, for all the wonderful things that Christmas brings. We say together...

We thank you, God, for our families and friends and all who love and care for us. We say together...

God our Father,

you created the whole world

and you have given us Jesus the Light.

We thank you for everything you have given us.

Help us to share all your gifts with others.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Prayers of Intercession ('Prayer for others')***

Dear friends, the Lord Jesus has come into the world to scatter the darkness and bring the light of God's love to the lives of all people. Let us pray together for all who live in darkness, that they may know the light of Christ.

We pray for all who live in the darkness of war...

 Lord Jesus, Light of the world:

 **fill the world with your love.**

We pray for all who live in the darkness of pain...

We pray for all who live in the darkness of hunger...

We pray for all who live in the darkness of loneliness...

We pray for all who live in the darkness of poverty...

We pray for all who live in the darkness of doubt...

*Other similar intentions may be added as appropriate.*

Lord Jesus Christ,

your birth in Bethlehem brings peace and light to all on earth.

Scatter the darkness that threatens so many people,

that your light may shine in their lives

and your peace live in their hearts,

for you are Lord for ever and ever.  **Amen.**

***The Lord's Prayer***

With our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the whole world, let us pray to the Father in the words Jesus has given us:

**Our Father...**

***Blessing***

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

God loved the world so much that he gave us his only Son.

May the joy and happiness, the peace and light which Jesus brings,

fill your hearts and lives,

and the blessing...

Rejoicing in Jesus, the light of the world,

go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Prayers for the New Year

*New Year's Eve is celebrated throughout the world with much enthusiasm and joy but of course today and tomorrow are, for us, days of the Christmas Season. 1 January celebrates the Naming of Jesus and the prayers provided here hold together the images associated with the turning of the year with the Christmas Feast we celebrate. Many churches may want to hold a vigil service or to combine prayer with a parish celebration and these prayers may be used and adapted for that purpose. Suitable hymns and carols may be sung. These prayers may also be used by households who wish to gather for prayer on New Year's Eve.*

***Short Sentences from Scripture***

*One of the following may be used:*

You crown the year with your goodness. (*Psalm 65.11)*

The Lord knows the way that I take;

when he has tested me, I shall come out like gold. (*Job 23.10)*

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,

and all these things shall be yours as well. (*Matthew 6.3)*

Do not worry about tomorrow,

for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.

Today’s trouble is enough for today. (*Matthew 6.34)*

I am the Alpha and the Omega,

the first and the last, the beginning and the end. (*Revelation 22.13)*

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour. (*Luke 4.18,19)*

***Greeting***

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  **Amen.**

From Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end:

grace, light and peace be with you.

**And also with you.**

***Introduction***

My brothers and sisters, as we gather at the dawning of a new year we are one with the whole of humanity in looking forward with new hopes and dreams, with ambitions and intentions to improve our lives and transform the way we live. As Christians, let us be resolved to follow the Lord, to seek peace and unity among the whole human race, to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, and to be ambitious for the higher gifts of faith, hope and love.

*Silence*

***Prayer***

Let us pray.

*Either:*

Glorious are you, Lord, God of time and space,

creator of the world,

sustainer of all that exists.

You have made yourself known through times and seasons

through the rhythm of life

and the turning of the years,

to people of all generations, young and old.

Bless us as we gather in prayer,

and protect us through the coming year

that we may be resolved to follow your Son, born of Mary,

and honour his name by the lives we live,

for he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Or:*

Almighty God,

creator of each new year and sustainer of all its days,

you lead all things to their ultimate fulfilment in you.

In time, you sent your Son, born of a woman,

so that, adopted as your children and filled with his Spirit,

we may cry out 'Abba! Father!'

Bless us and keep us, in this new year (*or:* in the year to come)

Let your face shine on us and be gracious to us

so that the gift of peace may dwell in our hearts and lives.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Or:*

From the rising of the sun to its setting,

you gather a people to yourself, O God.

From the dawning of a new year

until darkness settles across its days

your powerful hand guides and sustains,

for you are the Creator of all that exists,

and your Spirit breathes life into all that gives you glory.

Bless us as we gather in your Son's name,

that the new year to which we look forward with hope

will bring fulfilled promises and the fruits of your kingdom

which Jesus Christ, through his humble birth, has brought to the world,

for he is Emmanuel, God with us,

and is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

***Prayers for Forgiveness***

We have gathered together to rejoice in Jesus, at whose name every knee shall bow, and we look forward with hope and anticipation towards a new year.

Before we hurry forward let us pause and reflect on our past year, acknowledging the times we have failed in our discipleship, and let us be resolved to follow more fervently the way of Jesus. May he fill our hearts with forgiveness and strengthen us to move forward with a new hope and a pure heart.

E*ither:*

*The Penitential Sentences for Christmas may be used*

*or:*

Lord Jesus, you give water from the well of life free to all who are thirsty.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are making all things new.

 Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

*Or:*

Lord Jesus, born of a woman, born a subject of the

Law, you redeem us and make us children of God.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, treasured child of Mary, you come to live

among us and bring us the blessings of peace.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, the glory and praise of the shepherds, you

fulfil the promises of God and bring us salvation.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

***Readings***

*The Christmas readings or the propers for the Naming of Jesus may be used or any of the following or other appropriate readings:*

Psalm 65

Genesis 1 – 2:4

Philippians 2:1 -11

Hebrews 1:1-6

Revelation 21:1-7 or 22:14

***Intercessions***

*Invitation to Prayer*

 At the turning of the year, we praise the God of all time and space, praying for guidance and protection, and resolved to follow his ways closely.

*Petitions*

 We pray for those for whom the passing year brings regret or painful memories:

 may the months ahead bring blessings and peace.

 ***R.*** Lord of the years

 **guide and keep us with your love.**

We pray for all for whom the future is frightening: may they embrace the challenges ahead and discover the light of Christ in even the darkest of situations. ***R.***

We pray for our parish community: throughout the year may we grow in love for one another. ***R.***

We pray for those who are isolated or lonely: may the know the comfort and consolation of God's holy people. ***R.***

We pray for the church throughout the world: may all Christian people proclaim the mighty works of God through lives of justice, love and peace. ***R.***

We pray for the leaders and nations of the world: may they seek peace and reconciliation and bring hope to those who live in despair. ***R.***

We pray for those who have been bereaved: may they be comforted by the Holy Spirit. ***R.***

*If the Eucharist is not being celebrated the Intercession continue with:*

Lifting our hearts and voices in prayer to God our Father, let us seek his will in all things: **Our Father...**

***The Peace***

Lord Jesus Christ,

you gave the gift of peace to your apostles

as they gathered in your presence, risen from the dead.

Look not on the things that we have allowed to divide us

but consider our faith and our longing for peace,

so that we may know the peace and unity of your kingdom,

where you live for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

*All exchange a sign of peace*

*At Midnight, the bells of the church may be rung.*

***Blessing and Dismissal***

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

May the Lord protect you and fill you with the grace of his Holy Spirit, that you may be resolved to follow his Son in faith and hope and love, and the blessing....

The Lord guards your coming in and your going out.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**