

An Australian Blue Christmas Service



**St Mary Magdalene's Church
Adelaide**

**Thursday 9 December
6.30 pm**

Welcome

The Empty Chair

Prayer

God of mercy and love, we gather here today, bringing our whole lives; our pain, our sorrow, our confusion, our hopes and our dreams to this safe space.

Meet us in our darkness, we pray, and give us freedom to struggle together as we seek your presence.

We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Lighting the central candle - the Light of Christ

Reading

John 1:1-5

The Hymn to the Word

In the beginning was the Word. The Word was close beside God, and the Word was God. In the beginning, he was close beside God. All things came into existence through him; not one thing that exists came into existence without him. Life was in him and this life was the light of the human race. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The chant is sung.

Theme A is sung throughout. Theme B may be added ad. lib.

The Lord is my light, my light and sal-va-tion: in God I trust, in God I trust. The

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The musical notation consists of two staves in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'Theme A' and the second 'Theme B'. Both staves begin with a repeat sign. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Jacques Berthier 1923-94

Lighting the first candle

We light this first candle to remember those we have loved and lost.

We pause in silence to remember their names, their faces, their voices and the memories of them that we hold in our hearts.

A pause for silent reflection.

We thank God for them and ask for God's comfort. When we are feeling overcome with sadness, we ask for the peace that is greater than we can ever understand.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

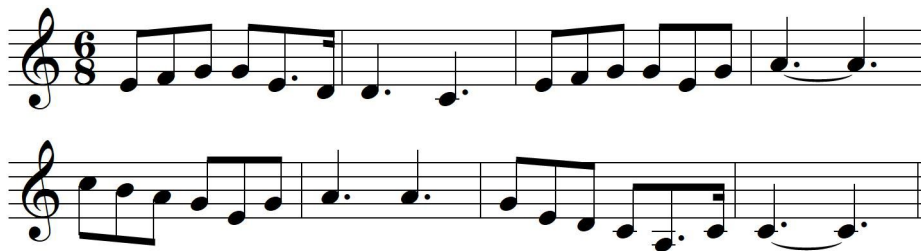
Reading

John 20:1, 11-18

Mary Magdalene searches for the body of Jesus

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.'

The hymn is sung.



1 How are you broken, beloved?
Where are you lost and in pain?
I am your hope and your healing,
I am your starting again.

2 What are you paying, beloved?
What does it cost to survive?
I am the whole of your ransom,
I am your coming alive.

3 Why are you weeping, beloved?
Whose is the body you seek?
I am your love and your laughter,
I am the gospel you seek.

4 Where are you going, beloved?
When did your travelling start?
I am your source and your ending,
I am the home of your heart

5 God of my joy and delighting,
Spirit on whom I depend,
Jesus, I'll come at your calling,
name you my lover and friend.

Lighting the second candle

We light this candle to represent other losses that face us,

The loss of health, of independence, of freedom, the loss of confidence or security, the loss we feel when our plans come to nothing, or when our hopes end in despair.

God longs to bind up those who are broken-hearted, let us silently name our losses and griefs to God.

A pause for silent reflection.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Reading

Isaiah 43:1-4

Restoration and Protection Promised

But now thus says the LORD,

the One who created you, O Jacob,

the One who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the LORD your God,

the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

I give Egypt as your ransom,

Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my sight,

and honoured, and I love you.

Lighting the third candle

This candle represents our courage: the courage to face sadness, the courage to share feelings with others, the courage to acknowledge our doubts and fears, our anger, frustration and stress.

It represents the courage needed to hope.

God longs to take us by the hand and say to us, do not fear, I have called you by name, you are mine. Let us pray in silence for the courage we need.

A pause for silent reflection.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Reading

Julian of Norwich

From Revelations of Divine Love

“And in this he showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed. And it was as round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, ‘What may this be?’ And it was answered generally thus, ‘It is all that is made.’ I marveled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God.

In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it.”

The hymn is sung.

(♩ = 138)

1. In our dark - ness, in ___ our light; In our suf - fer - ing,
2. Earth and sea and tree ___ and sky, from this tur - moil we
3. In one cross up - on ___ a hill, in the cross - es that

in our joy; In the warmth and in ___ the cold; To your
long to fly. Love and beau - ty which sur - round, so we
haunt us still, loves a light that shows a way through the

Refrain

vis - ion of hope we hold. All shall be well, shall all be well,
fight ___ to save this ground.
dark-ness to Eas-ter's day.

Ev - e - ry man - ner of thing shall be well. well. _____

Lighting the fourth candle

We light this fourth candle to remember those who have supported us in our pain and those whom we have supported.

We pause to remember the prayers, the words of comfort and support, the acts of kindness from family and friends and those who stood with us in our time of need and the times when we have stood by others.

A pause for silent reflection.

We pray for companions and comforters for all who are alone and feel abandoned by God and by humanity.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Reading

Luke 10: 30-34

The good Samaritan

Jesus told this story, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The hymn is sung.

A new com - mand - ment I give un - to you that you
love one an - o - ther as I have loved you, that you love one an -
o - ther as I have loved you. By this will o - thers know that
you are my dis - ci - ples if you have love one for an -
o - ther; by this shall o - thers know that you are my dis -
ci - ples if you have love one for an - o - ther.

Focus on the central candle

Our presence here and the candles we have lighted represent some of life's joy and pain.

The central candle represents Jesus who has come to be Immanuel, God with us, in the midst of it all.

Jesus who was born as a helpless baby – and who hears our cries, and understands how weak and helpless we can feel.

Jesus the good shepherd, who knows our hearts and offers us healing and hope in the midst of our suffering. Who shows us how much God loves us. And who lived and died to restore our relationship with our heavenly father.

Jesus who will reign as King over God's new creation, where there will be no more sickness or death or crying or pain for all eternity. And who has given us his Holy Spirit to help, comfort and guide us as we seek to follow him here on earth and wait for his glorious return.

Music

Prayer

Gracious and loving God, be with us in our darkness.

Make your face shine upon us and give us peace.

We pray for your Holy Spirit to be at work within us,
may your Holy Spirit comfort us, sustain us,
and remind us of your constant love for us.

We trust this time of listening to you and ask you to open our hearts and our minds to whatever it is that we need to hear from you tonight.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Lighting of individual candles

Psalm 139

- 1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
**You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you comprehend my thoughts long before.**
- 2 You discern my path and the places where I rest,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 3 Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
- 4 You have encompassed me, behind and before,
and laid your hand upon me.
- 5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
- 6 Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
- 7 If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in the grave, you are there also.
- 8 If I take the wings of the morning
or dwell at the farthest limits of the sea,
- 9 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
- 10 If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',
- 11 The darkness is no darkness with you,
**the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness and the light are both alike.**

The chant is sung.

In our dark - ness there is no dark - ness with you, O
Lord: the dark-est night is clear as the day. (In our)

Jacques Berthier 1923-94

Prayer

Comforting God, as we leave this place we ask you to enfold us in your loving arms. Be with us in our struggles, and when we feel lost in the darkness, let your light shine upon us and help us find our way back to you.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

The hymn is sung.



1. Star - Child, earth - Child, go - be - tween of God, love Child,
2. Street child, beat child, go, place left to go, hurt child,
3. Grown child, old child, mem - 'ry full of years, sad child,
4. Spared child, spoiled child, hav - ing, want - ing more, wise child,
5. Hope - for - peace Child, God's stu - pen - dous sign, down - to -



Christ Child, hea - ven's light - ning rod, *This year, this year,*
used child, no one wants to know,
lost child, sto - ry told in tears,
faith child, know - ing joy in store,
earth Child, Star of stars that shine,



let the day ar-rive when Christ-mas comes for ev-ery-one, ev-ery-one a - live!

Shirley Erena Murray 1931-2020

Extracts from Together in Song including chants from the Taizé Community and the hymn 'A new commandment', and hymns by Elizabeth Smith and Andrew Mintern, are reproduced with acknowledgement.

