

# Childhood Encounters



St Aidan's Uniting Church  
First Sunday after Christmas  
31<sup>st</sup> December 2023

## Call to Worship

We heard the Christmas story –  
a story of those who came to the manger  
to worship the Christ-child.

**We too came  
to worship God-with-us  
in the form of a tiny baby.**

As the people of old gathered  
to worship the baby,

**so too, do we come  
and worship God.**

## Prayers<sup>i</sup>

At this time of changing years, it is a time to look back and look forward. Instead of the usual prayer of confession, we will adapt the Ignatian practice of Examen. This practice is usually an end of day prayer, but today we will use it to guide our reflections for the year past. I have, however, included the instructions for the daily Examen as you may like to take this home and try it as a spiritual discipline.

1. Place yourself in God's presence. Give thanks for God's great love for you.
2. Pray for the grace to understand how God is acting in your life.
3. Review your day — recall specific moments and your feelings at the time.
4. Reflect on what you did, said, or thought in those instances. Were you drawing closer to God, or further away?
5. Look toward tomorrow — think of how you might collaborate more effectively with God's plan. Be specific, and conclude with the "Our Father."

## Words of Assurance

You are here, O God,  
and we give you thanks  
not only for your presence,  
but also for your forgiveness.  
Help us so that our next year  
we may walk closer to you  
than we did this year.  
Help us experience again that grace.  
Help us to know we are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Prayer of Intercession

In the year that has been, O God,  
there have been so many needs in our world –  
some we know about, many we don't –  
and we hold them before you now.

In the year that has been  
we have seen conflicts continue  
and new conflicts emerge;  
we have seen political instability,  
coups, and elections;  
we have seen the leaders of insurrections arrested in some countries  
while peaceful protesters have been sent to jail in others.

We have seen natural disasters around the world  
and in our own country –  
bushfires, floods, cyclones, and earthquakes.

We have seen world leaders start to make tentative steps  
towards countering climate change  
and the breaks put firmly on  
by those who make their riches by fossil fuels.

We have seen the damage caused  
by deliberate misinformation  
that creates an alternate reality  
for those who are too challenged  
by cries for equal rights.

We have seen all this  
and much, much more;  
we pray for those who are affected  
by the events of this year  
and for those who help  
shape a future with hope.

Help us that we too  
may share your hope  
with the world around us.  
Amen.

## Benediction & Blessing

We heard the story  
of people who encountered the Christ-child.

**We to encountered  
the Messiah  
in the form of a tiny baby  
who is God-with-us.**

As we go out  
we look to be surprised  
at the unexpected places we see God  
and the unexpected people  
who recognise God with us:

**Let us go out and live our lives  
in worship of God.**

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<sup>i</sup> Further information available at <https://www.jesuits.org/spirituality/the-ignatian-examen/>