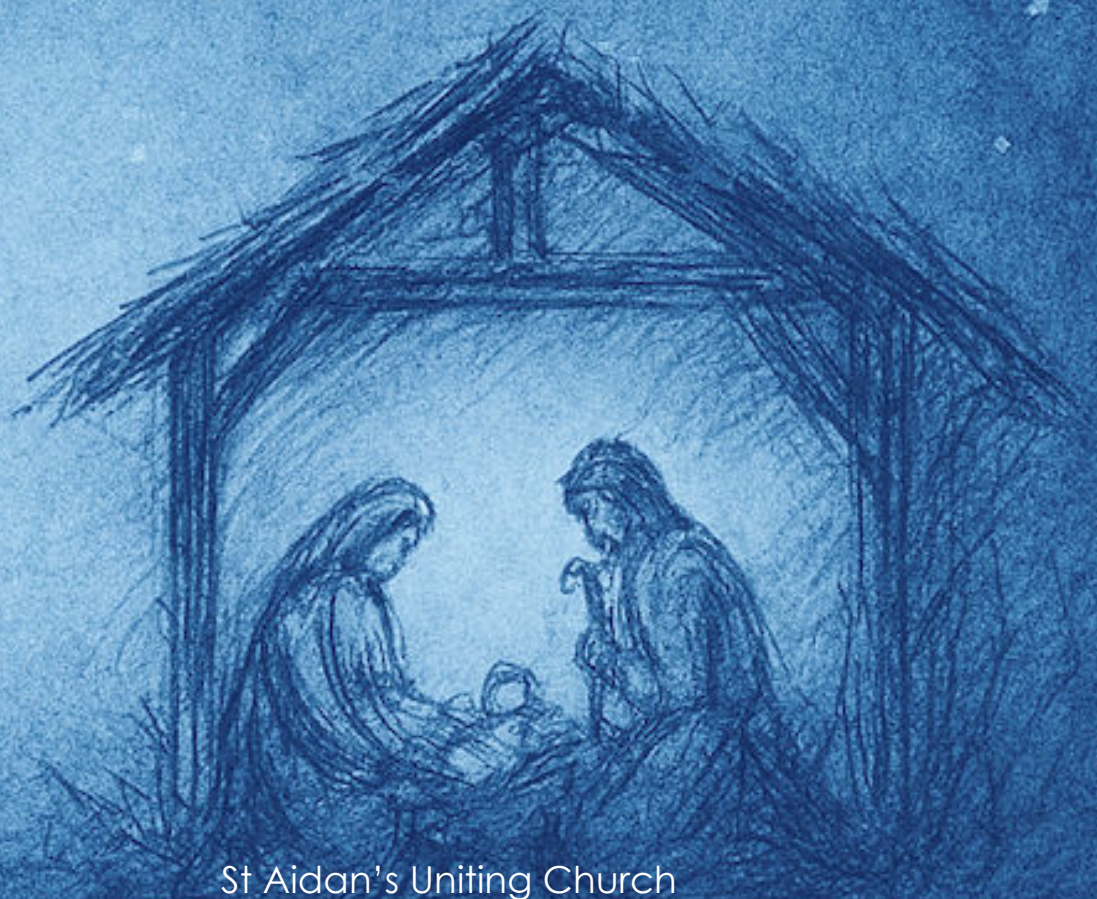


*Come to
Bethlehem*



St Aidan's Uniting Church
Christmas Day, 2025

Introduction

Come, now, to Bethlehem.

How will we get there? The journey is long and the road is rough. It won't be an easy journey, but we must travel there.

And where does the journey start?

Some say it begins in Nazareth. For others, it starts in Bethlehem and travels the Ancient Near East over a thousand years. However, this story starts in time beyond our dreaming, before the universe exploded into being, at a time when all that existed was the Divine Source of Love.

Reading: John 1:1-5; 14

Candle

This is the hope candle.

It is a candle that shines brightly in darkness,
and shares its light generously.

This is the peace candle.

When the angels sang "peace on earth,"
they sang of how far its light will shine.

This is the joy candle.

When we know that what we experience now,
is not the end of the story,
we have joy.

This is the love candle.

Without our first being loved,
it is hard to share God's love.

This is the Christ-candle

The light of hope, peace, joy and love
shines in the darkness
and no matter how dark the world becomes
the light of Christ will always shine.

We light the Christ candle.

Reading: Luke 2:1-3

Prayer

God of the universe,
the peace you offer
is not the peace of the world,
with all its limitations.

The peace you offer
is not enforced by might,
or threats,
or armies marching across the land.

We give thanks that your peace
is only enforced by love –
calling all people to love one another
and so begin a new relationship.

At this Christmas-tide we remember
that while kingdoms and empires will fall,
your reign, O God,
endures forever.

While kingdoms and empires
may enforce their ideals through might,
your reign, O God,
is in our responding to your love.

As we journey to Bethlehem
this Christmas,
may we approach it walking alongside
those who travelled there
all those years ago;
may we too be part of the story
and knowing your love in our lives.
Amen.

Reading: Luke 2:4-5

Prayer

Sometimes we find the journey hard,
Loving God.

Sometimes it feels like all too much
and we feel too fragile
to follow the path.

Walk beside us:
encourage us when we feel
it is all too difficult,
companion us on our journey,
sharing hospitality and support.

Support and nurture us
throughout the difficulties that life poses
until we arrive,
at the end of this stage of our journey
in our Bethlehem
and we can rest our weary souls.
Amen.

Reading: Luke 2: 6-7

Prayer

Throughout our lives
there have been many people
who have come to support us
at a time when we have needed it most
and for each of these we give thanks.

For unexpected hospitality,
a kind word when it was needed,
a smile from a stranger,
or a hug from a friend.

Strengthen us when the ending of one journey
means the beginning of another.

Help us to welcome the Christ-child
as the extended family did
all those years ago
when they sheltered Mary
and supported her through the birthing.

Help us to create a space
where others feel safe to come
and where we can share your love with the world,
a love that was made human
in the form of Jesus the Christ
on that first Christmas.
Amen.

Reading: Luke 2:8

Prayer

As we celebrate Christmas,
we pray for the people in our society
who are like the shepherds of Bethlehem.

We pray for the lonely,
the isolated,
the rejected,
the homeless,
drug addicted,
and those in gaols.

We pray for the people
who are hard for us to pray for
because it offends our sensibilities:
the men who use violence,
drug pushers,
bikie gang leaders,
and divisive shock-jocks on the radio.

We pray for all who need healing and wholeness
especially for those
who have that need because they are unwanted.

When we pray “your kingdom come”
we pray that those on the edges of our society
may know what it is to be loved,
for only in experiencing love
can they share love.

When we pray “your kingdom come”
we also pray that you use us
and help us be part of the solution.
Amen.

Reading: Luke 2: 9:14

Prayer

Teach us to be your angels,
God of all people,
that, we too,
may be part of bringing your good news
to your beloved people.

Help us to remember
to not simply give empty words
but the good news in action and deeds.

And help us to respond
to your good news,
not like Octavian with his wealth,
but as the shepherds
who respond
and travel to Bethlehem.
Amen.

Reading: Luke 2: 15-20

Prayer

God,
Source of Divine Love;
Love made into the human form,
help us to take the risk of loving
this year
and every year,
as we travel out into our lives,
may that love journey with us.
Surround us with your compassion
so we may share that compassion,
teach us to truly know
that we are loved
so that we may share that experience
with all who need to know your love,
Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10

Benediction & Blessing

We are the people of hope,
and God sends us
to gather the scattered
and help heal the broken.
We are the people of peace,
bringing peace and justice
when the world needs reminding
of a different way.
We are the people of joy,
a call to live with the joy
of knowing that what is, is not the end.

We are a people of love:
sharing love
and so spreading love
through our world.

We are the people of Christ,
following in Christ's footsteps
as we share God's hope, peace, joy and love
with the world around us,
until the reign of God
is reality
and all people know they are loved.

Go knowing that God is with you,
beside you, before you –
God the Parent, Christ, and Spirit.
Amen.

Christmas blessings to you.