

Leader: Loving God, we present these prayers before you, confident in your willingness to bless and guide us.

Holy God,
We recognise our failure to love as you have called us to love. We confess that we have let the rush of this season overshadow the joy of your coming into our lives.

Forgive us for our distractions and our doubts, for hesitating to share your light with the world. Help us prepare our hearts truly for your birth, That we may embrace the miracle of your love and peace.

In Christ's name, we pray. **Amen.**

Closing Responses & Blessing

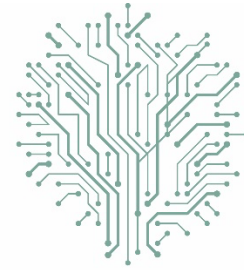
May the peace of Christ fill your hearts and beyond.
May the light of God's love guide your path,
May you find hope in the knowing that you are not alone on this journey.

Go forth in the spirit of love and joy,
As we await the birth of our Savior.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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SALT BUSH

UNITING THE SCATTERED COMMUNITY

Worship for the scattered Christian community

Matthew 1: 18-25
The Gift of Emmanuel: Embracing
the Mystery of Christmas

Welcome

Welcome and greet your congregation and/or faith community.

Lighting the Christ Candle

We light the Christ candle to remind ourselves of God's grace, which serves as the illuminating light of the world.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the sovereign First Peoples of these lands and waters where we meet, the _____ Nation (of the _____ peoples). We pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and to all descendants of these nations who have cared for this place since creation. We also honour all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples here today.

Stuart McMillan

Assembly Consultant Covenanting Assembly Resourcing Unit

Music for Reflection

Suggested song:

**O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
By Mystery of Faith**

<https://mysteryoffaith.bandcamp.com/album/o-come-o-come-emmanuel-single>

Passing the Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The Word around the Bush

Matthew 1: 18-25

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Message

From your Scattered Community Minister or another leader within your gathering.

Questions for conversation

- What might God be inviting you into this Christmas?
- What distracts you from focusing on Christ's birth?
- What are you grateful for this season?
- Do you see yourself in Mary and Joseph?

Silence

Please take a moment to find a comfortable position and prepare yourself for five minutes of complete silence. Gently close your eyes and allow yourself to relax, while remaining fully present and aware of your surroundings.

Prayers of Confession and For Others

Leader: As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, let us offer our prayers for the Church, the world, and all in need.

Congregation Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for our Church, that we may proclaim the joy of Christ's coming to all the world, sharing love and hope with those around us.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for peace and goodwill among all peoples, that the spirit of Christmas may bring reconciliation and healing to our hearts and communities.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are lonely or grieving, that they may find comfort and solace in this season, and know the presence of Christ in their lives.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for the marginalised and vulnerable, that we may reach out with compassion and provide for their needs, embodying Christ's love.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for our families and loved ones, that we may gather in joy, sharing laughter and love.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for our community and those in need of healing, that they may experience God's peace and touch during this holy season.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for our needs that we hold in silence within our hearts.

Lord, hear our prayer.