



**a time to celebrate, and a time to reflect**

This year's Uniting Church SA promotional postcard for Christmas carries an invitation:

*Everyone is welcome at the table.*

*We all experience Christmas differently — some find cause for celebration, while others take time to reflect. But no matter what you're anticipating this Christmas, there is a place for you at our church.*

*Why not join us this Christmas?*

This worship resource will help you plan a worship service for 'everyone' — young and old — that incorporates both celebration and reflection.

# CELEBRATE & REFLECT

## AN ALL-AGE WORSHIP RESOURCE

### FOR CHRISTMAS, 2014

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#### USING THIS WORSHIP RESOURCE

These notes have been prepared by the Uniting Young People Team of Mission Resourcing SA to help congregations plan worship that intentionally involves children as well as youth, young adults, middle-aged and older people.

You may make as many copies of the notes as needed for your worship planners and leaders. The use of music and other copyright elements is not covered in this permission.

Read through all the material. Discuss it as a planning team. You may use any of the ideas that are appropriate in your situation.

Bible quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Readers Version.

For other intergenerational worship ideas see: <http://sa.uca.org.au/cfm/ministry-leaders/all-age-worship/>

If you use these resources, please let us know how you use them. Send a brief email to [children@sa.uca.org.au](mailto:children@sa.uca.org.au).

#### UPSIZING & DOWNSIZING

This resource can be used by large or small congregations and can even be adapted for use in a home setting.

Each planning group will need to adapt the ideas to suit their own particular situation: the people and the facilities.

# ALL-AGE WORSHIP NOTES

## WHAT IS ALL-AGE WORSHIP?

Intergenerational (all-age or whole-church) worship is, first and foremost, worship.

We worship to show the value (worth) we place on God and our relationship with God.

Worship is an encounter between God and God's people; a dialogue in which God speaks and people respond.

*Intentionally intergenerational* worship

- allows this dialogue to take place in a variety of ways, engaging several senses, possibly including a sense of wonder and a sense of humour
- focuses on a single, clear theme and connects that theme with the lives of the worshippers
- provides worshippers (young and old) with an experience they can remember and carry into their lives beyond the worship experience
- encourages interaction and dialogue among people of the various generations and people with different personalities, experiences, life-styles and interests
- takes seriously the understanding of the church as the multi-faceted body of Christ
- recognises and values the children present in the worshiping congregation and 'the child within' each youth and adult.

## WHY HAVE ALL-AGE WORSHIP?

The biblical model of the Church is of a body with a variety of different parts fulfilling different functions; each valuable and all working together.

All parts of such a body suffer when one part is cut off. All parts of a worshiping congregation suffer when one part is segregated from the others.

In worship, God speaks to and through people of all ages. When children (as well as elderly and differently-abled people) are present in worship, they grow through the acceptance and respect shown by others. They show others a different — possibly truer — face of God, and they force worship leaders to focus on the basics of theology and of worship in a way that is clear and creative. This benefits everyone.

There are also some practical aspects to all-age worship at Christmas time, remembering, of course, that Christmas is all about a baby.

Australians see Christmas as a family time. We want worship to add to, rather than detract from, the family experience.

This applies to your church members and the extended families that join them at Christmas time. It also applies to guests, fringe-members and people in the community who are drawn to the church at Christmas.

The guests you invite to your church at Christmas may be of any age. You want to plan worship that does not exclude anyone who comes — either physically, by inference or by what you do and say.

## PRESENTING AN ALL-AGE WORSHIP SERVICE

Try to keep the logistics as simple (and well planned) as possible, so that no one is overburdened or stressed at the last minute.

As early as possible, begin working with the various existing teams who will be called on to help present the service. If needed, organise new teams for this particular event.

People who decorate the worship area have a key role and should be involved in planning so that visuals relate to the theme of the worship.

Your hospitality team is an important part of your worship team and must be consulted in the planning stage, especially if you are asking them to do something different from their ordinary tasks.

Your tech team (and/or people responsible for preparing electronic or printed materials) has a vital role in presenting the worship.

In choosing your up-front worship leader/s, you will need special wisdom to balance the desire to be inclusive with the desire to present the 'best' to what may be a larger-than-usual gathering.

## PLANNING ALL-AGE WORSHIP

All-age worship has elements of spontaneity and the unexpected. This is one of the special gifts young children and new-to-church adults can bring to worship.

Careful planning assures that all worship leaders understand, and are comfortable with, the direction and flow of the worship plan.

Familiarity and understanding make it easier for worship leaders to cope with and embrace spontaneous (spirit-led) participation.

It makes sense to have an intergenerational team plan intergenerational worship. A special team consisting of one person (or better, two people) representing the youngest, the middle and the oldest age groups of the congregation can work with the pastor/minister/priest or lay ministry team.

Planning as an intergenerational team can be a valuable experience for all involved. Older members help younger members understand worship practices; younger members give older members fresh insights and enthusiasm.

A team that represents the wider congregation will also have a broader awareness of people in the congregation with skills and interests that can be drawn on in the worship, including hospitality, music, drama, visual art and technology.

### Suggested planning steps:

1. Begin with prayer, and trust God's Spirit to guide your planning.
2. Identify your purpose, date and theme.
3. Look through these notes to see how they can help in planning the service God is leading you to hold.
4. Develop a worship outline or flow chart.  
If you are just starting to think about all-age worship: begin with your regular worship plan. Consider how some of the ideas in this resource could help you make some elements of your regular service more experiential, more sensory or more intentionally involving people of all ages.

If you have had some experience with all-age worship: look at the resource and consider how the service, or parts of it, might work in your situation.

If you are regularly engaging in all-age worship: pick up any suggestions in this resource that suit the way you do it.

5. Flesh out the outline, considering your own people, traditions and facilities.
6. Work with worship leaders to plan details: who does what? When? and How?

AND

7. Practise!

If your service is going to involve movement, people, props and/or other elements that are different from your regular worship pattern, you will need a rehearsal.

Small groups may practice their part of the service individually, but you will also need a complete walk through or 'dress rehearsal'.

This will pinpoint any logistical problems, allow the worship leader/s to fine-tune instructions for the worshippers and ensure that the service itself runs smoothly.

The walk-through will also help you assess the timing of the service. If it looks as if it will run too long, find ways of streamlining or shortening it.

You can use rehearsal time as an opportunity to pray together and to remind one another that worship is not a talent show. Leaders are, themselves, worshiping God while they help others to know and worship God.

## INVITATION AND ADVERTISING

The first people to speak to about your service are the worshipping members of your congregation. Begin early to let them in on the excitement of what is being planned. Help them catch the vision of a deliberately multi-generational Christmas worship.

Uniting Church SA postcards can be used as invitations to the Christmas worship. You could make up posters using the artwork.

Some churches do a letter-box drop in their neighbourhood with invitational postcards. Members can give the postcards to special neighbours, friends and family.

Encourage members to think of acquaintances that may need some space/time to reflect and celebrate the birth of Christ in this season.

They may invite those people to come and worship with them. And they may do more. They will be willing to follow through, listen to their guests' concerns and serve them in ways reflect Jesus.

## HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is the responsibility of all members of the congregation.

Members who invite and bring guests to the service have the primary responsibility for looking after their guests.

A designated **HOSPITALITY TEAM** may have special responsibilities.

### At all times

Keep the worship space (and any other spaces used) safe:

- know where to find alternate exits and first aid equipment
- know how to use the fire extinguishers (particularly if you are using candles in the service)
- know who has current first aid training
- remove any hindrance to movement — blocked aisles or doors, cables on the floor, broken or damaged furnishings, etc.

### Before the service

- Greet people as they arrive — guests and members, young and old. Greet people by name wherever possible.
- Help people find seats and get settled. Pay special attention to the very young, the very old and people with physical disabilities. Seat them where they will be able to see and to hear, but will not feel conspicuous.

If the service is going to involve small group interaction, try to seat people in appropriate groupings.

- Provide information about what to expect.
- Distribute books, papers and materials required for the service.

### During the service

- Watch for and respond to any signs of disturbance or distress. This may be anything from helping someone find the toilet or a drink of water to helping parents with disruptive children or dealing with someone who has a fainting or epileptic episode.
- Collect offerings.

### After the service

- Be sure that each worshipper (young or old) is sent on their way with a handshake and/or blessing.
- Provide an after-service cuppa or snack.

And, as they say in most job descriptions, 'other duties as may be required'.

## WORSHIP SPACE

A clean, tidy and comfortable worship area can help guests and regular worshippers feel welcome. Make sure the people who keep your church clean know they are valued as part of the worship team.

An all-age approach to worship may work best with a re-arrangement of furniture, or even in a hall rather than a sanctuary.

The sample service suggests arranging seating around a central table, set up like the table in the postcard picture.

## VISUALS

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves with images. Make sure that you provide images and decorations that they can respond to.

Involve people with artistic talent and your technology team (if you project images electronically) in creating memorable visual impact for all worshippers.

The postcard image can be the starting point for visuals.

In the sample service the visual focus is a family Christmas table, resembling the postcard photo.

You may also decorate the worship space with your church's traditional Christmas decorations and/or emphasise the celebration and reflection theme with shiny/reflective decorations.

## MOVEMENT

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves through movement and manipulation of concrete objects. Make sure that you provide something to do.

Rhythmic movement -- clapping, miming and dancing -- can be linked with music.

In the sample service people handle nativity figures and other objects and have several opportunities to move about the worship space.

Some people may be reluctant to take part in unfamiliar physical activity in worship. Encourage them to give it a go or even to help someone who needs assistance.

## MUSIC

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves through music and rhythm. Provide music that they can respond to and participate in.

Much of the music in worship is congregational singing. Invite people to sing, but allow them to simply listen if they are more comfortable doing so.

Your regular instrumentalists and vocalists (organist, band or choir) may perform some music as well as leading/accompanying congregational singing. You may also involve musicians of all ages who are not regularly part of your music team.

Small congregations, or congregations that do not have strong musical leadership, may use recorded music to lead singing.

Include traditional hymns (perhaps carols that carry a lot of memories and meaning for older worshippers) as well as more contemporary songs and songs written with children in mind.

You'll find some song suggestions for the sample service on page 7.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Worship is about our relationship with God. Congregational worship is also about our relationship with other people. All-age worship encourages the growth of these relationships.

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves as they do something or talk with other people.

Relationships in worship begin with the greeting at the door (or in the car park) and the nod, smile or handshake with people seated nearby.

In the sample service people have the opportunity to do some reflective 'wondering' with people around them.

Some people may be uncomfortable when asked to talk to others in small groups. Provide an intra-personal alternative. Let everyone know that it is perfectly OK if some people choose to pray or to think about the question by themselves.

## SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves through facts, lists, graphs, and patterns.

In the sample service there may be a demonstration of reflection and refraction.

## SERMON

Some people who worship with you process information best when they simply listen to a speaker (a person of knowledge and authority) who presents them with facts, ideas, challenges and encouragement. In traditional worship this happens in a sermon.

An all-age worship service does not require different sermons for different groups of people. There is a single all-age sermon — short, generally a simple application of the overall theme of the service, and (where possible) incorporating visuals and actions.

On page 8 you'll find notes on a sermon that may be used in the sample service.

## HOLY COMMUNION

At Christmas we celebrate and reflect on Jesus, our Saviour coming to us as an infant. In Holy Communion we celebrate and reflect on Jesus, our Saviour, coming to us in bread and wine.

The invitation 'everyone is welcome at the table' can be read as an invitation to Holy Communion.

It would be appropriate to celebrate Holy Communion in this Christmas worship — if your congregation's policy is truly that 'everyone is welcome at the table.' If there are any restrictions to the invitation to the sacrament, do not have it during an invitational service of this sort.

If you decide to offer Holy Communion, consider serving it from the 'family' celebration table that forms the visual focus for the service. Include the idea of reflection and celebration in the way the sacrament is introduced and described.

## **SOMETHING TO TAKE HOME**

People like to have souvenirs of special events. People are more likely to remember and talk about your worship service if you provide them with a tangible memento or conversation starter.

It can be helpful to provide people with some questions or Bible verses related to the theme of worship that they can take home and discuss in their household.

In the sample service each worshipper receives a Christmas bon bon to take home. It contains a Bible verse for reflection.

## **BEYOND THE WORSHIP SERVICE**

The table that forms the visual focus for the service may be the table to which you invite people who are alone at Christmas to share a meal with some hosts from the congregation.

## **WORSHIP LEADERS**

One person (or a pair of people) is the overall worship leader for the all-age service.

Worshippers (particularly guests) will recognise this person as the host/compere who is responsible for helping them engage with what happens in worship.

Several other people (children, youth or adults) can each lead different parts of worship. A younger person and an older person may share some of the leadership roles.

Leadership of the sample worship service, may involve:

- a HOSPITALITY TEAM (multi-generational)
- a MUSIC TEAM (multi-generational) and MUSIC LEADER
- a TECH TEAM (multi-generational)
- a GRANDMA
- three READERS (any age)
- a FAMILY with an infant to interview
- a STORY TELLER (individual or group)
- three SPOKESPEOPLE (any age)
- a PREACHER
- a PRAYER LEADER/S (any age or multi-generational).

# CHRISTMAS WORSHIP NOTES

## POSTCARD THEME



This worship resource coordinates with the Christmas 2014 postcard campaign of the Uniting Church in South Australia.

The postcard image places the birth of Jesus in the context of our busy holiday celebrations. It can be a reminder that the birth took place in the midst of a busy, crowded census homecoming in Judea.

On the back of the postcard is this invitation:

*Everyone is welcome at the table.*

*We all experience Christmas differently — some find cause for celebration, while others take time to reflect. But no matter what you're anticipating this Christmas, there is a place for you at our church.*

*Why not join us this Christmas?*

'Everyone is welcome' can be a reminder that when Mary and Joseph arrived at Bethlehem, they were apparently not enthusiastically welcomed. But the family welcomed shepherds and kings. The Child who was born there welcomes 'everyone' into his family.

The invitation/greeting is also a reminder to worship planners that people approach the season — and worship in many different ways and experience the worship in different ways.

Our Christmas worship can give people an opportunity to celebrate and reflect. The sample service looks at two kinds of reflecting: (1) considering, wondering, thinking deeply and (2) mirroring, passing on light.

- (1) **Postcard cost:** \$69 per 1000 (minimum of 1000)
- (2) **Orders close:** Wednesday 22 October 2014
- (3) **Available for pickup:** during the Presbytery and Synod meeting, 30 October-1 November 2014, and from 212 Pirie Street after this date.
- (4) **Enquiries:**  
Communications Unit:  
Phone: (08) 8236 4249  
Email: [communications@sa.uca.org.au](mailto:communications@sa.uca.org.au)

## BIBLE TEXTS

Revised Common Lectionary identifies texts for both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

### CHRISTMAS EVE

**Gospel:** the Luke 2:1-14 (15-20) account of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem and the visit of the shepherds.

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 9:2-7, includes two familiar passages: 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. . . ' and 'For a child has been born for us. . . '

**Psalms 96** praise to a god of righteousness,

**Epistle:** Titus 2:11-14 . . . we wait for the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### CHRISTMAS DAY

**Gospel:** Luke 2: (1-7) 8-20 the birth of Jesus or John 1:1-14 Jesus, the light of the world, comes into the world

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 62:2-7 or Isaiah 52:7-10

**Psalms 97 or 98**

**Epistle:** Titus 3:4-7 . . . This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

or Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12) The identity of Jesus

## SUGGESTED SONGS AND HYMNS

### STORY

Away in a manger (McFarland)

### CELEBRATE

Angels from the realms of glory (Montgomery)

Come join me, believers, triumphantly sing (Lain Hymn)

Good Christians all, rejoice (Neale)

Hark! the herald angels sing (Wesley)

Joy to the world (Watts)

O come, all ye faithful (Latin Hymn)

O come, little children (von Schmid)

### REFLECT (1)

Born in the night, Mary's Child (Ainger)

I wonder as I wander (Niles)

Love came down at Christmas (Rosetti)

What Child is this? (Dix)

### REFLECT (2)

Christmas blessing (Podlch)

I want to be a reflector (Planet Shakers)

When the song of the angels is stilled. (Thurman)

## SUGGESTED SERMON

A sermon is, by definition, a reflection (deep thinking) about a Bible theme. This suggested 'reflection', delves into another interpretation of the word 'reflection' (the mirror image, or sending out light from another source.

Human beings, created in 'the image of God' are designed to reflect their creator.

### THE DEMONSTRATION

Set up a demonstration of what it means to reflect light. Use the light of one of the candles on the table as the source of light. Use mirrors to demonstrate how the light can be reflected and sent around the room.

### THE MESSAGE

The theme of 'light' is introduced in the alternate Gospel reading for Christmas Day: 'The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.' (John 1:9)

In John's Gospel, Jesus used the light image for himself: 'I am the light of the world'. (John 8:12).

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said to those who followed and listened to him: 'You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine in front of others. Then they will see the good things you do. And they will praise your Father who is in heaven.' (Matthew 5:14,16)

Christians reflect Jesus, the Light, when they stay close to the light source, and when they

demonstrate the attitude and actions of Jesus. 'You should think in the same way Christ Jesus does.' (Philippians 2:5)

'Don't just listen to the word. You fool yourselves if you do that. You must do what it says.' (James 1:22) 'I will show you my faith by what I do.' (James 2: 18)

Isaiah's prophecy describes the great light – Jesus, the Messiah – as 'the Prince Who Brings Peace. . . He will make the kingdom strong and secure. His rule will be based on what is fair and right. (Isaiah 9:6-7).

People who are reflectors of Jesus also work for peace, justice and righteousness.

Another passage from Isaiah, gives more specific details of the work of the Light:

'The LORD has anointed me  
to tell the good news to poor people.  
. . . to comfort those whose hearts have  
been broken.  
. . . to announce freedom for those who have  
been captured.  
. . . to set prisoners free from their dark  
prisons.  
. . . to comfort all those who are sad.' (Isaiah  
61)

Jesus refers to this prophecy in Luke 4:18.

We are effective reflectors when we know Jesus better and better, when we reflect on who Jesus is and what Jesus said and did and then 'go and do likewise'.

# SOME CHRISTMAS PRAYERS

## A FORMAL RESPONSIVE PRAYER

**LEADER:** Surround us, Lord, this Christmas time, with the light of your presence.  
Help us to overcome fear and temptation  
to be victors over sin and despair  
to become what you want us to be.

**ALL:** Surround us, with the light of your presence,

**LEADER:** Surround our families, Lord, this Christmas time, in the shelter of your arms.  
in each moment of their daily lives  
in the decisions that they face  
in the relationship they develop

**ALL:** Surround our families, in the shelter of your arms

**LEADER:** Surround our world, Lord, this Christmas time, with the joy of your Salvation  
Where there is sickness and disease bring healing  
Where there is hunger and despair bring hope  
Where there is torture and oppression bring release

**ALL:** Surround us with the joy of your Salvation.

**LEADER:** Surround us, Lord, this Christmas time, with your love and hope  
Help us to celebrate your birth  
to think deeply about your life  
to reflect your love and hope to the world around us.

**ALL:** Surround us with love and hope, Amen

## SHOUT FOR JOY

Shout for joy  
the whole earth,  
and everything within.  
Rejoice!  
For Light has come into the world,

The mountains sing,  
the seas resound  
to the praise of your name.

Salvation  
once promised is here on earth.

The angels' song  
rings in the air,  
a child has been born.

Hallelujah!  
The Saviour of the world is here.

(Author unknown)

## A CHILD'S PRAYER

God, thank you for Christmas  
for all my friends and family  
I love them so much  
and place them all into Your loving hands.

God, thank you for Christmas  
for sending Jesus to be with me  
I love Him so much  
and give my heart to him. Amen.

## FOR CHRISTMAS MORNING

Loving Father,  
Help us remember the birth of Jesus,  
that we may share in the song of the angels,  
the gladness of the shepherds,  
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of  
love all over the world. Let kindness come  
with every gift and good desires with every  
greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing  
which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry  
with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy  
to be thy children, and Christmas evening  
bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts,  
forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

(Robert Louis Stevenson)

## REJOICE

Let the just rejoice -- for their justifier is born.

Let the sick and infirm rejoice --  
for their Saviour is born.

Let the captives rejoice --  
for their Redeemer is born.

Let slaves rejoice -- for their Master is born.

Let free men rejoice --  
for their Liberator is born.

Let All Christians rejoice --  
for Jesus Christ is born.

(St. Augustine of Hippo)

# CHRISTMAS BON BONS

Bon bons (or 'crackers' or 'poppers') have been part of Christmas celebrations since the mid 1800s. They were made in England as a way to encase candies, trinkets and paper hats for celebratory table settings at Christmas time. They also contained a strip of special paper that makes a snap or pop when quickly pulled apart.

You can make bon bons to use with this worship service.

Consider arranging a popper party (craft working bee) where people of all ages who enjoy paper craft can construct crackers to give to all worshippers. High school students who are looking for something to do after the end of term may organise the 'popper party'. Be sure they have to budget for the project in your planning and make sure the materials are available.

Instead of a page of jokes, these bon bons contain a Bible text for celebration and reflection (see next page). You may also include some wrapped lollies. Avoid the cheap (unsafe) toys commonly found in purchased bon bons.

Find a simple tutorial for making bon bons at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wP32MkKdTfI>

For each bon bon you'll need

- A-4 paper (possibly shiny/reflective gift-wrap paper)  
Alternatively, make the bon bon using a cloth serviette, handkerchief, or face-washer that can be kept and used rather than discarded.
- 10-15cm piece of cardboard tube
- Cracker snap (available at craft shops and special Christmas shops)
- Stickers (star, etc) and copies of the postcard art to attach as decoration
- Ribbon
- Strips of paper with Bible verses (see next page)
- Tiny mirrors and other treats to put in the bon bon.

You will also need sticky tape and scissors



# REFLECTION VERSES FOR BON BONS

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**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*Life was in [Jesus], and that life was the light for all people. (John 1:4)*

---

**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*Some people did accept [Jesus]. They believed in his name.  
He gave them the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)*

---

**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*[Jesus] became a human being. [Jesus] made his home with us.  
We have seen his glory. It is the glory of the one and only Son. (John 1:14)*

---

**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*[Jesus] came from the Father. And he was full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

---

**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*We have all received one blessing after another. God's grace is not limited. (John 1:16)*

---

**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*[Jesus] Christ has given us grace and truth. (John 1:17)*

---

**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*No one has ever seen God. But [Jesus] has shown us what God is like. (John 1:18)*

---

**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*No one has ever seen God. But [Jesus] has shown us what God is like. (John 1:18)*

---

**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*[Jesus] is the gleaming brightness of God's glory. He is the exact likeness of God's being.  
He uses his powerful word to hold all things together.  
He provided the way for people to be made pure from sin. (Hebrews 1:3)*

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**Something to reflect on.**

What is the good news here to celebrate at Christmas?  
How can we reflect it in our family? . . . among our friends? . . . in the community?  
*His grace made us right with God.  
So now we have received the hope of eternal life as God's children. (Titus 3:7)*

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# CELEBRATE & REFLECT

## SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

Spoken 'script' is in italics; comments and instructions are in plain type.



This worship service explores the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The story is familiar to many who worship with you, but may be new (or hazy) to others.

The exploration has three sections:

- Celebrate the event with the angels who sang praises to God
- Reflect (1) on the event with Mary who pondered on what had occurred
- Reflect (2) the event with the shepherds who went out telling others what they had seen and heard.

If your space allows it, arrange the congregation's seating around a central table. Alternatively, place the table at the front where it can be seen clearly by all worshippers. For a small congregation it may be a small round table that allows seating for four people. For a large congregation it may be a long trestle-type table that could seat 20.

Cover the table with a red cloth.

### 1. AS PEOPLE ARRIVE

The **HOSPITALITY TEAM** greets each person and invites them to help set the Christmas table. They give each person one or more items to place on the Christmas table.

Let the postcard picture guide your selection of items: plates, cutlery, serviettes, bon bons (see page 10). Add three large candles in sturdy holders, a Bible and nativity figures like the ones in the postcard picture. Let the number of worshippers you expect determine the size of the table and the number of place-settings you can arrange.

You'll need a 'grandma' (or several grandmas) to organise the placement of items, to reflect on the way each item contributes to the whole and to thank each person for their help.

When people have added their item to the table, they take their seats.

The **MUSIC TEAM** leads a sing-along of three or four favourite Christmas carols.

The **TECH TEAM** may display words of the carols.

### 2. WELCOME

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *Everyone is welcome to this Christmas worship at [name of church].*

*My name is [name]. I'll be leading you in worship.*

*As we begin our worship we will light three candles as a reminder that we worship God who is our Heavenly Father, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.*

**FIRST READER** picks up the Bible from the table and reads:

*John wrote this about the birth of Jesus: 'The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world'. (John 1: 9)*

Lights the first candle on the table.

**SECOND READER** takes the Bible and reads:

*When Jesus had grown up he said this about himself: 'I am the light of the world. Those who follow me will never walk in darkness. They will have the light that leads to life.' (John 8:12)*

Lights the second candle on the table.

**THIRD READER** takes the Bible and reads: *Jesus also said this about us:*

*'You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine in front of others. Then they will see the good things you do. And they will praise your Father who is in heaven.'* (Matthew 5:14-16)

Lights the third candle on the table.

### 3. FAMILY INTERVIEW

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *At Christmas we celebrate and reflect on the birth of a baby. Let's meet a baby and [his/her] family.*

**WORSHIP LEADER** introduces and interviews a couple/family with a new baby. Include siblings of the baby.

- *When was [baby's name] born?*
- *How did you celebrate when [baby's name] was born?*
- *What deep thoughts did you reflect on that you had not considered before?*

*Thanks, folks, for sharing your story.*

### 4. SONG

**MUSIC LEADER:** *Let's sing about the birth we celebrate at Christmas*

**TECH TEAM** may display the song words as . . .

**MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing 'Mary's Boy Child' or another carol that introduces the story of Jesus' birth.

### 5. THE STORY OF JESUS BIRTH

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *[Name of baby from interview family] is a special baby.*

*All babies are special to their own families. Every child's birth is a special story.*

*Let's hear the story of the birth of Jesus – the baby who was very special to all of us.*

**STORY TELLER** Reads Luke 2:1-20 from an easily understood translation of the Bible **OR** reads it from a Children's Bible story book **OR** tells it in their own words.

As Joseph and Mary are first mentioned, the **STORY TELLER** (or a helper) holds up the figures so everyone can see them, and then replaces them on the table.

As the baby is first mentioned, do the same.

As angels are first mentioned, do the same.

As shepherds are first mentioned, do the same.

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *Thanks, [Story Teller]. That's an amazing story.*

*You know, there are lots of ways people can react when they hear the story. In fact, even the characters in the story reacted in different ways.*

The three **SPOKESPEOPLE** in sections 6, 8 and 10 may be costumed actors who make their comments in the first person, eg 'This is what we did'.

Alternatively they can be people in regular clothing who hold up figures from the nativity set and speak in the third person, eg 'This is what they did.'

### 6. ANGELS CELEBRATE

**ANGEL SPOKESPERSON:** *When we/the angels heard that God's Son was born on earth we celebrated!*

*If we'd had arms we would have waved them in the air or punched the air. If we'd had legs we would have jumped and danced. If we'd had backs, we would have slapped one another on our backs.*

*But angels are spirits – no arms, no legs, no backs, no bodies. Just spirits. Our spirits expanded that night and filled the hills around Bethlehem.*

*And voices. Our songs of praise – new songs that had never been sung before, songs that were never needed before – filled those hills. Our songs alerted the shepherds that something absolutely awesome was happening.*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *The angels celebrated with songs. I wonder how you celebrate Jesus' birthday. You may talk about it with the people sitting around you.*

Allow time.

### 7. CELEBRATE SONG

**MUSIC LEADER:** *Let's celebrate Jesus' birth by singing like the angels.*

*This song has words we don't usually use: 'Glory in excelsis Deo' means 'praise God in Heaven',*

*Because you do have arms, you can wave them overhead as we sing the angels' words.*

**TECH TEAM** may display the song words as . . .

**MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing 'Angels we have heard on high', waving hands for the 'gloria in excelsis Deo'

## 8. MARY REFLECTS

**MARY SPOKESPERSON:** *When I [Mary] had that wonderful little baby, my heart was full of love. But my head was filled with so many things I didn't understand.*

*Why us? Why did God choose Joseph and me to be parents to his child? Why here? Why did God let my baby be born in a shed?*

*The angel said this baby is God's Son. But he looks like an ordinary baby. How could I be a mother to God's Son? What would people think if I said he was God's Son?*

*The angel said he was a king. How could my son be a king? How could Joseph and I raise a king?*

*The angel said he would be powerful, but he is so helpless now. How can I take care of him and protect him? Will God take care of that for me?*

*I don't have the answers – yet. Just lots and lots of things to reflect on.*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *Mary reflected on the mystery of Christmas. She balanced her fears and concerns with hope and faith.*

*I wonder what you reflect on at Christmas time. You may talk about it with the people sitting around you.*

Allow time.

## 9. REFLECT SONG

**MUSIC LEADER:** *Let's reflect on Jesus' birth by reflecting on it like Mary did.*

*You may use your arms again. Pretend you are holding a baby in your arms and rock him gently as we sing.*

**TECH TEAM** may display the song words as . . .

**MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing 'Born in the night, Mary's Child' rocking arms to the rhythm of the song.

## 10. SHEPHERDS REFLECT

**SHEPHERD SPOKESPERSON:** *Hey, we [the shepherds] aren't great at thinking deep thoughts. We're men of action.*

*When we heard the angels, we were scared out of our wits. But that didn't stop us. We had to see for ourselves — was it true or a hoax?*

*Then we saw that mum and dad and the bub, exactly as the angel had said. It was all true!*

*It was like the sun was shining bright as noon and we could see clearly that it was all true.*

*We took that light and that certainty out of the shed and into the Bethlehem streets that night and kept talking about and living with it all our lives.*

## 11. SERMON: BEING REFLECTORS

See suggestion on page 8.

## 12. REFLECT SONG

**MUSIC LEADER:** *Let's sing about some ways of reflecting Jesus in the world.*

**TECH TEAM** may display the song words as

**MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing 'When the song of the angels is stilled'.

## COMMUNION OPTION

You may include Holy Communion in the service at this point, following your usual practice.

See notes on page 5.

Include a song 'The candles are lit and the table is laid' (Robin Mann) or another song that links the communion to the invitational statement on the postcard.

## 13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

**WORSHIP LEADER OR CONGREGATIONAL LEADER** makes any needed short announcements.

Invite people to any upcoming activities of the congregation.

Explain how the offering will be collected and how the offering will be used.

## 16. OFFERING

The offering is collected in the usual way.

The **MUSIC TEAM** may perform a vocal or instrumental musical item.

## 17. PRAYER

**WORSHIP LEADER** or **PRAYER LEADER/S** leads the congregation in one of the prayers on page 9,

and/or in their own prayer for themselves and others. Include specific concerns of your community.

## 18. SENDING OUT

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *We are coming to the end of our worship time together.*

Gathers some bon bons from the table.

When you leave, we're going to give each of you a special bon bon to take home. Don't pop it until you get home and have some time together, perhaps at a meal. When you pop them you'll have something to reflect on as you remember what we have said and done here.

*When you leave, may you continue to . . .*

**FIRST READER:** *. . . celebrate the coming of Jesus as the angels celebrated,*

Takes the first candle from the table and carries it to the exit from the worship space.

**SECOND READER:** *. . . reflect on the mystery of Jesus' birth and life.*

Takes the second candle from the table and carries it to the exit from the worship space.

**THIRD READER:** *. . . reflect the love of Jesus to the world.*

Takes the third candle from the table and carries it to the exit from the worship space.

## 19. CLOSING SONG

**MUSIC LEADER:** *Even though it's Christmas, we're not going to finish our worship service with 'Silent Night'. We're going sing — and dance — about celebrating and reflecting all year long.*

**TECH TEAM** may display the song words as . . .

**MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing and dancing 'Reflector'.

The **MUSIC TEAM** may repeat the song and lead the congregation in a sort of conga line toward the exit where the **HOSPITALITY TEAM** gives each person a bon bon.