



‘Worship at home’ Christmas 2022

We celebrate the Christmas
celebration of the birth of Jesus
Christ, bringing new life and hope
for all the world.



This is indeed good news of great joy!

Light a candle to celebrate the presence of Christ in our midst.

Christ HAS come

as baby in a manger

Christ is risen and IS with us

in our lives today

Christ WILL come again

bringing the fullness of God’s kingdom.

Christmas is a celebration of the Spirit of God

revealed in our world in unexpected ways.

Opening

At this Christmas time,
we celebrate the birth of Christ.

Christ has come.

Signs of hope, peace, joy, love and new life surround us,
sometimes unexpectedly.

Christ is with us.

We are called to live as a people
of transformation and new beginnings.

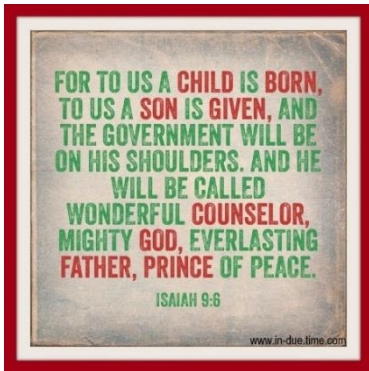
Christ will come again.

Come, and fill us with new life.

Amen



The ancient Israelites saw themselves as God’s chosen people,
and God was their ruler. They continued to long for a time when
a king, as God’s representative, would save them from darkness,
despair, poverty, injustice and oppression. They did not know
when this would happen, or who this would be, but they continued
to wait, and hope.



Prophets such as Isaiah continued to bring a vision of God's kingdom, and Christian tradition now finds the hope of Jesus Christ in these words of promise and truth. However, the birth of Jesus did not occur as may have been expected. Rather than a king in a place with wealth and power, Jesus came as an ordinary baby, born in the darkness of a stable, in poverty, to an unwed teenage mother. We are reminded that things we hope for and anticipate do not always work out as we would expect: our God is a God of the unexpected.

Luke 2:1-14

At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own hometown. Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in

cloths and laid him in a manger - there was no room for them to stay in the inn. There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born - Christ the Lord! And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels

*appeared with the angel,
singing praises to God: "Glory
to God in the highest heaven,*

*and peace on earth to those
with whom he is pleased!"*

Good News Bible

The angels brought unexpected news of joy, in the birth of a new king. This birth was in unexpected and uncertain circumstances, not a grand palace but a humble stable; not to a royal family but to a young, unwed, unknown couple.



But this birth brought an unexpected gift of joy, and hope for times to come. Every human life brings a gift from God to the world: a gift of joy; a gift of love; a gift of new wisdom and capacity for goodwill. The birth of Jesus is a gift of good news for all people: a baby who was born to make a difference to our world.

**Unexpected joy bursting in
birthing new beginnings**

creating love

renewing life

All will be well

God is here

- Rev Sue Ellis

Once again, this year has been one of turmoil and uncertainty. In our own lives, our communities, and globally, there have been continuing uncertainty, unrest and displacement for many. Despite this, we can find unexpected moments of hope to bring us great joy: moments when love and affirmation bring us comfort, moments when truth brings clarity, moments when justice breaks through, bringing us hope for times to come.

What has brought you joy, perhaps unexpectedly, this year?

- Have you had a new baby in your family, or a wedding?
- Have you reconnected with an old friend, or perhaps made a new one?
- Have you experienced an unexpected blessing through helping another?

Sometimes joy takes us by surprise, as we find delight in the everyday laughter of a child, the beauty of a sunset, or the contentment of a cup of tea in the sunshine.

Our God is a God of surprises. The birth of Jesus brought unexpected joy, revealing the love of God to all people. We see how God continues to be revealed in our world, and in our lives, in ways that are often surprising and unexpected, even when life is tough and things seem bleak.

Each Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, we are remembering the difference that baby made to our world, and anticipating a time when the promise of good news of great joy for all will be fulfilled: a time when there will no longer be conflict and turmoil and hatred and despair, a time when God's love and mercy will bring reconciliation and renewal for all of creation.

This Christmas, may you not only find unexpected joy for yourself, but may you also look for ways to bring unexpected joy to others, bringing to fulfillment that message of the angels: good news of great joy for all.

**Reflect on one thing you can do this week
to bring joy to another.**



Prayer

Gracious and loving God, come and reveal your presence with us today, as you did in the Christ Child so long ago. May we be open to finding you in the ordinary, everyday things of our lives. We pray for hope for those who experience darkness and despair; peace for those living in conflict and fear; love for those feeling isolated and alone; joy to surprise us in your presence, in ways we might not even expect. Amen.

Closing

Fill us with hope... that we might bring hope to others;
Fill us with peace...

that we might make peace in all our relationships;

Fill us with love... that we might show your love in all we do;

Fill us with joy...

that we might bring unexpected joy to the world. 4