



# New Year's Day 2022

## Introit - Shine Jesus Shine

Kirchenband St. Josef Oldenburg 2016  
(Grahm Kendrick 1987)

<https://youtu.be/BkxoTmKpDcU>

## Welcome

May today's worship bless you

## Acknowledgment

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place  
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.



*Uncle Bob (Photo T. Lyndon)*

## Call to Worship

Ancient Prophets spoke to the people of God saying:  
**"Rise up my people, rise and shine."**

It was a tough year for many last year  
Let the New Year be a time of recovery and blessing

**We will put our trust in God**  
**We will rise up and shine**

## New Year's Day Prayers

Lord our God, You have spoken through ancient prophets, angels and through your Holy Spirit, saying:

**"Rise up my people, rise and shine with your glory"**

You make us your agents of salt and light in the world.  
You empower us and give us gifts and the fruits of the Spirit.

**We will put our trust in You Lord**  
**We will rise up and shine**

Jesus our Lord, You have taught us how to live in the light  
and reflect the glory of your Father  
You have taught us about the power of your love to transform the world  
You laid down your life for us and showed us how to give our life for others  
in the ministry of love.

You have forgiven and redeemed us all  
and have shown us how to forgive and redeem others

**We will put our trust in You Lord**

**We will rise up and shine**

Holy Spirit when we fail to understand and are blind to the truth  
You lead us through the darkness of the unknown into the light of knowing God  
You change our hearts and offer us a new beginning  
A new way forward into the future of this New Year  
You will bless us and work through our hearts  
You will help us use our gifts to minister in Jesus' name and bless his church.

**We will put our trust in You Lord**

**We will rise up and shine**

### **Readings for New Year's Day**

#### **Hebrews 2:10-18**

<sup>10</sup> It was fitting that God,<sup>[a]</sup> for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup> For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father.<sup>[b]</sup> For this reason Jesus<sup>[c]</sup> is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>12</sup> saying, 'I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,<sup>[e]</sup> in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.' <sup>13</sup> And again, 'I will put my trust in him.' And again, 'Here am I and the children whom God has given me.'

<sup>14</sup> Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. <sup>16</sup> For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters<sup>[f]</sup> in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself was tested by what he suffered; he is able to help those who are being tested.

#### **Matthew 2:13-23**

<sup>13</sup> Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph<sup>[a]</sup> got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

<sup>16</sup> When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men,<sup>[b]</sup> he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>17</sup> Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup> 'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.' <sup>19</sup> When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, <sup>20</sup> 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' <sup>21</sup> Then Joseph<sup>[d]</sup> got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup> There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.' ©NRSV National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

## Sing along with the Kings Singers: O little Town of Bethlehem

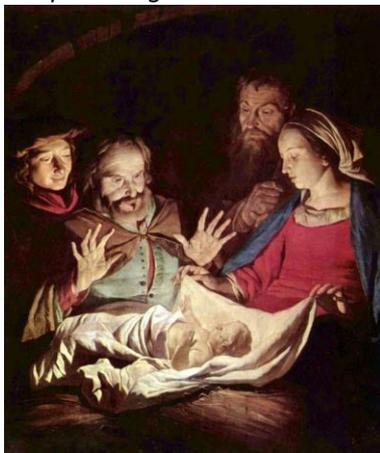
The Kings Singers 2021

<https://youtu.be/xjCyxe-ZZH0>

### A Christmas Day message of Hope (Luke 2:1-20) Rev Tina

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen*

*(As promised, Rev Tina is providing her Christmas sermon for us this week.)*



Whenever an angel appears we hear the words: Do not fear. This fear is not the same as that anxious fear about the future. It is a transforming fear, a lifegiving fear, a fear that recognises the mighty power of God and a sense of the divine.

Perhaps those who see something extraordinary feel so much awe and wonder a holy fear takes over their heart. We do not expect angels to suddenly appear and speak to us, yet the angels appeared to shepherds who received a message of hope, believed it and rushed off to find Jesus. This may make us wonder.

Who are our angels? Who has brought us messages of hope, at a time in our life when we most needed it.

I wonder who nurtured your faith and who was responsible for you being here today. Perhaps they were like an angel with a message for you. The shepherds were invited to the birth of Jesus. They were peasants, powerless, at the bottom of the social rung, yet we are told God trusted them with a message of Jesus' birth and identity.

What does this say about God? Perhaps God sees things differently. Knows the deep stirrings of people's hearts and knows who is best to trust with a divine message or to be the mother of Jesus.

Why shepherds? In the Old Testament shepherds often became kings. Jesus is the good shepherd who shepherds his people. So why not these men who were in the fields shepherding their sheep. The shepherds were outsiders and not known to Jesus' family. Perhaps they were locals, known in Bethlehem.

The shepherds felt great fear for God, awe and wonder and joy when they found Jesus. Perhaps this gospel invites us to ponder on how Jesus has come into our lives this year and ask ourselves, 'What will be my response to Jesus' message to me this Christmas?'

The shepherds left behind their flocks, what they do daily, their occupation and set off to find a tiny baby who the angels called Messiah and Saviour. They made room in their hearts and lives for Jesus. Perhaps we are invited to make room for Jesus too. The shepherds believed in the message from the angel and acted on it. They sought Jesus. They needed to see this sign for themselves.

Perhaps those of us who have heard a message in our heart, are being called to act on it, and set out to find out what it's all about. It is ultimately God's initiative. God spoke through angels and touched the lives of simple shepherds, and their lives were never the same again.

Don't we all want a profound experience of God where we feel awe and joy? Don't we all want to see Jesus, or at least an angel?

Who says angels don't exist? Just because we have not seen one doesn't mean they don't exist. We cannot see love, but it exists. We see it all around us in the actions of others and ourselves.

I was invited to someone's home the other day, to a feast they cooked for me, and they spoke of God with awe and wonder. The feast was to thank me for my prayers. They were like an angel for me, reminding me of my own faith and love for God. When they spoke about God they were filled with wonder and awe for God. They were like an oasis for me. They provided the care I needed. And they are not Christian. They are outsiders, like the shepherds were.

I have baptised outsiders to our faith, a yoga teacher, and a migrant from China who both had no faith. Through the movement of the Holy Spirit, they discovered Jesus, through God's initiative they became new Christians with hearts filled with wonder and awe and holy tears as the spirit stirred their hearts. Perhaps God favours outsiders. Perhaps they are open to hearing God's message. Often, they remind us of the time long ago when we first heard the message of God in our hearts, when we first felt wonder and awe.

Mary pondered all she heard from the shepherds, pondered on it in her heart. This Christmas what did you ponder about? This gospel invites us to think big, not small. God has called all of us into the glorious vision for creation. Deep within your heart you know that call. Ponder on it. Make it your vision for the future. Set off like the shepherds to find it and when you do, own it, and live it out in your life. When we have a vision and know where we are going, we can step into that vision and live as people who are united with Jesus. We can grow into the truth of Jesus' promises for a future for us, as a church and an individual.

Having a vision influences how we treat others and how we share the message of hope that has been handed down through the centuries to us, from the shepherds who first heard it from the angels. Shepherds who believed and acted on that message. It became their vision which they lived out in their lives where they witnessed to their experience of Jesus. It is a message that has been handed down to us and it is up to us to believe it and act on it and seek out Jesus. Once we have found Jesus, often in others, we can choose to share that vision of hope with others. We can speak of Jesus' true identity, and what we have found when we have sought God in places such as stables and feed troughs, and on the streets of our community.

On Christmas Eve a young man was playing a saxophone while a homeless man sat on the ground begging and listening. I gave them both some money. I also gave some chocolates to the man without a home. His face lit up with a smile, not for the money, but for the chocolates, which were like a Christmas present.

We are blessed when we listen to outsiders. We are blessed by their faith. We are blessed when angels come to us, often in disguise as strangers or loved ones, to share the good news, kindness, and love, and often awe and wonder. Perhaps we may even feel wonder and awe at what we find when we seek Jesus this Christmas Season.

May you be blessed by the Christmas message and feel wonder and awe that changes your hearts and lives.



## Anuna The Coventry Carol

arr. Michael McGlynn Anuna – M'Anam 2016

<https://youtu.be/Wit-jGD4wCw>

### A New Year's Day Message of Hope – Rev Tina

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen*

Today's gospel is often avoided. It's about violence and atrocities and Jesus beginning his life as a refugee. It reveals a stark contrast between the gospel for Christmas Day and today, where there is joy, followed by sorrow. We cannot avoid it. It is the way things are in the world.

I found out this as a teenager aged thirteen. On Christmas Day my grandparents gathered us all together in their home, her five children, their partners and around fifteen grandchildren. We had been to church and now it was time for a traditional meal with turkey and pudding with sixpences. It was my grandmother's happy moment.

Next day was Boxing Day. My cousin, Christine, and myself were staying with our grandparents. My grandfather was sitting in his favourite chair in the lounge room, and I sensed he was looking at us for the last time. He then went outside into his beloved veggie garden and orchard. Later, my grandmother went out to call him in for a cuppa and found him dead under the apricot tree. I remember her calling out: *What will I do without him?*

I'd never known death or grief before and felt helpless. My grandmother asked me to sit with him while she tried to find a doctor and contact a funeral director. It took a long time, and I became familiar with what happens to people after they pass away. I lost all fear of death after seeing my grandfather's face looking so peaceful. What a stark contrast between Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

There are many people in our congregation and community who have experienced the very same joy and sorrow within a short time around Christmas. It leaves its mark on their hearts. We need to comfort and support them around the time it happens, and afterwards. When one member of our congregation hurts, all feel it.



On Christmas Day an angel delivered a message about Jesus' birth and identity to shepherds and the heavenly host rejoiced.

About two years later an angel delivers another message in a dream to Joseph. The angel tells him to flee to Egypt, to save Jesus from being killed by Herod. Joseph takes this message seriously and flees with Mary and Jesus, to Egypt, where the family become refugees. It would have been a long Journey.

After they fled, the wise men from the east who interpreted the stars and had travelled to Israel seeking Jesus also fled. They had met with Herod who felt threatened by the birth of Jesus. The wise men had told Herod they were seeking a baby who they called: King of the Jews. Herod tried to use the wise men to find Jesus, but they were warned in a dream and travelled home another way, without returning to Herod. When Herod found out he was enraged and sent his men to kill all the children under two years of age in Bethlehem and surrounding areas. It is said about twenty were killed and

their parents and all those who knew them wept and grieved.



We may ask the question: Why didn't angels appear in a dream to the children's parents? Perhaps they did and some fled. We don't know.



Josephus, a Roman historian didn't report the killing of the children. He reported how Herod was guilty of atrocities. During Herod's later years he defended his throne by killing off anyone who threatened it in any way. He had eliminated his predecessors, and their supporters who were Hasmoneans and all members of their families and those related to him by marriage who were Hasmoneans, including his mother-in-law and brother-in-law, his Hasmonean wife and three eldest children. When he faced an assassination attempt, he executed all those involved including their families. He even planned to have all the Jewish nobility slaughtered when he died, to make sure the mourning for him was genuine. Killing babies to eliminate a threat to his rule would fit with his behaviour.

There have been many tyrants over the centuries and we still have them today, causing untold suffering, sorrow, and millions of refugees.

The angel who spoke to Joseph in a dream told him to stay in Egypt until Herod died. Joseph may have lived in Egypt for about three years, until Jesus was aged about five. After Herod died the angel returned with a message to go home.

Fearing Herod's son, Joseph travelled to a remote and unknown village called Nazareth and made his home where he hoped his family would be safe. It's a bit like many refugees wanting to settle in our country towns, far from the horrors of home.

Matthew wrote his gospel for a community of Jewish converts to Christianity. He tried to make sense of Jesus' story. Perhaps how he interpreted what happened formed the foundations of his faith and understanding and that of his community. He spoke from his faith and culture. He related Jesus' story to the history, thinking and theology of his people at the time.

Matthew spoke from his context as we speak from our context. He interpreted what happened from the context of Prophets, prophecy, the Jewish faith, and belief in God communicating through messengers called angels and in dreams. Perhaps we tend to trust prayer and the stirrings of the Holy Spirit within our hearts, as Paul spoke of and we may from time to time rely on rational discernment, even when prayer conflicts with it.

Matthew spoke of Jerimiah's message of hope to the exiles, about recovery. Egypt had connections with Moses. Jesus was portrayed as the new Moses. The new deliverer who will lead a new Exodus and bring a new covenant from God to his people. A new community of God will be founded. His mention of Jesus being a Nazorean may be a pun or word play.

We remember Phillip's words, 'Can anything good come from Nazareth?' Jesus appeared from nowhere. This may have contributed to him being rejected by his own people. He came from the wrong place and didn't conform to the Jewish tradition or notion of a Messiah.

So, what do we make of all this? How do we interpret it according to our context?

We tend to react strongly to tyrants who murder babies and persecute people, where they are forced to flee as refugees. Persecution, murder, and oppression is unacceptable in our community and culture. Most of us have experienced the highs and lows of life, its joys, and sorrows. In many ways, it's made us more resilient, deepened our faith and increased our trust in God. Some of us may not be so resilient at times in our life and we may choose to depend on others' love and support, until we recover. We cannot escape suffering and we interpret it according to our culture and faith.



Today is the first day for us as a new church community. Perhaps the gospel speaks to us about why God came amongst us as one of us. Perhaps the gospel offers us a message about what kind of church God is calling us to be.

Jesus suffered like us. He came to redeem us. When one of us suffers we suffer with them. What would it mean for us to redeem others? Redeem means liberate and restore. In many ways the Op Shop and Centre 81 does this kind of ministry.

Can we expand on this ministry?

Can we expand how we reach out into the community or connect with members of the community who come into our church buildings?

We are called to welcome all. We cannot ignore the suffering of our neighbours. Loneliness and poverty are all around us. People are struggling to recover from difficult times. Who do you know who are lonely and excluded? Who is God calling you to reach out to? Begin the journey today. Make that your New Year's Resolution. Believe in yourself. With God's help you can make a difference. It is by the grace of God and by prayer and trust in God, that we can move ahead together.

Ancient prophets such as Isaiah delivered God's message to a suffering people in exile, saying, 'Rise up my people, rise and shine.' The past few years have been tough. Pray for this New Year to be a time of recovery, healing, and blessing. Rise up and shine.

Let us strive to be one with Jesus and one another. Let us demonstrate to the world the binding love of God amongst us and outside these four walls – in our family and community and all we do.

Let us pray

Jesus our Lord, compassionate, gentle, and loving, help us pray and put our trust in God, like Joseph did. Help us strive to be united in Christ where we are one in the Spirit where we witness to Christ's love in the world. Bind us to you today and make your glory known in all we are and do, as the people of God on the way. Amen

***YouTube Hymn: I the Lord of Sea and Sky  
(Here I am Lord) Chet Valley Churches 2020***  
<https://youtu.be/2zr9SMm1gII>

### **Offering Prayer**

*(about offering up ourselves and giving thanks to God for all we have)*

**Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom all for transformation through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen**

## Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

### Prayers of the People – Heather Barnes (from September 2022, adapted)

Our loving and gracious God, we come humbly before you this morning to worship you and bring you our concerns as your people. We have so much to be thankful for, but often in the busyness of our daily lives, we do not make the time to do so. Although there is much good news, it is often overshadowed by grim events. We pray that we may see beyond our own immediate concerns, and in our own small way, do what we can to help.

All people of the world need your care and guidance Lord, but today we particularly bring before you our prayers for the West African Republics of Benin, Togo and the Ivory Coast. These peoples have endured much throughout history, including having many deported as slaves by European Traders. Despite having natural resources, these countries are predominately agricultural and many live in desperate poverty. Dear Lord, we pray for peace, unity and political and economic stability throughout the region.

We remember too, the people of Ukraine who are suffering death, injury and displacement with Russia attempting to occupy their country. This has been going on since last year and nightly we see on our TV screens the horrors of this war. We pray that good sense and reason will prevail and that this death and destruction will come to an end.

For all those worldwide who are entrusted with the responsibility of leadership, we ask for wisdom, courage, and compassion that they may lead wisely in order that your world may be shared and peaceful.

Within the Ecumenical and Presbytery Prayer cycles, we are remembering the congregations at St John's Anglican in Blackburn and the Uniting Church community of Manningham. Bless them all as they seek to share your love in their communities. We also give thanks for all retired Ministers who have faithfully served you and ask for good health and contentment.

This morning as we gather as Whitehorse Uniting, we pray for guidance as we journey towards our shared future. May we actively listen, be open minded and tolerant of varying ideas and suggestions. We ask your blessing on our ministry team of Rev Peter and Rev Tina as they seek to guide and lead us. Grant them good health and strength.

Dear Lord, we bring before you all who are grieving, facing troubling family situations, experiencing mental health problems, recovering from surgery or illness or awaiting operations or treatments. May they know the comfort of your peace as we name them silently in our hearts...

Loving God, may we as your church witness to your grace and love through our service to others and pray together the prayer you taught us –

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

**Heather Barnes funeral will be held at 2:00 pm on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at  
Whitehorse Uniting - Mitcham.**

#### Blessing

We go in Peace  
in the love of God  
in the Power of the Spirit  
May the Lord make His face shine upon us  
and be gracious unto us  
as we bring Christ's love  
and peace to the world.  
Amen

#### Hymn 755 Trees of the Field

Chet Valley Churches 2020

<https://youtu.be/ivfUKd6AFXw>

## Pastoral Care Tips



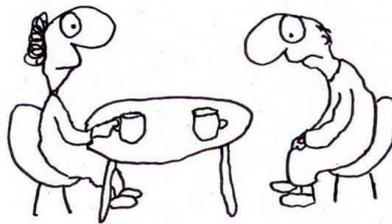
### 30 Random Acts of Kindness that will make you cry!

Novella 2022

<https://youtu.be/t93n9AKLSHg>

New year is famous for resolutions. The owner of a café at the Epworth made a New Year's resolution to do a random act of kindness every day for 12 months. I was meeting with a colleague ten years ago in the café and he gave each of us a coffee. He told us about his resolution.

Some people say New Year's resolutions are a waste of time. Don't listen to them. This year make a resolution to do a random act of kindness every day for 12 months. Imagine what will happen if each one of us did this. It may change the lives of others and the world. It may even change our lives.



*Leunig used with permission*

### **Ukrainians defy Russian Orthodox Christmas by celebrating now in Bucha**

DW News 2022

<https://youtu.be/kQa3IVIMTQk>

### **Bethlehem Welcomes back Christmas visitors after Pandemic slump DW New 2022**

<https://youtu.be/XfvtKziQcJ8>