

## WELCOME AND NOTICES:

Prayer evening on Tuesday 26 January, 7.30pm  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86965384617?pwd=EtLZEFiL2RWWGpXTWJZaC9Ma0VjUT09>

Meeting ID: 869 6538 4617  
Passcode: 680223

Next week is the 5th Sunday Giving, and it will be for the John Aves Education Project in Bethlehem.

## CALL TO WORSHIP:

Paul writes about Christ, 'For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells in bodily form' (Colossians 2:9)

## SONG: O COME LET US ADORE HIM

<https://youtu.be/C9VoSkzyjT4>

O come let us adore Him,  
O come let us adore Him,  
O come let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.

For He alone is worthy  
For He alone is worthy  
For He alone is worthy  
Christ the Lord.

We'll give you all the glory  
We'll give you all the glory  
We'll give you all the glory  
Christ the Lord.

## OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, we come rejoicing in your presence, for your love is stronger than death, your mercy reaches from the heavens to the very depths, and your kindness is seen in your grace in Jesus our Lord. Now take our worship, all we have and all we are, for your glory's sake. **Amen.**

## CONFESSION

We come with humble hearts before you, Lord, and confess our sins.  
**Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed. We have not loved you**

**with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

May God our Father forgive us our sins and bring us to the fellowship of his table with his saints for ever.

**Amen.**

## SONG: FULNESS OF GRACE

<https://youtu.be/iHOOvNlaz3w>

**Fullness of grace in man's human frailty,  
This is the wonder of Jesus.**

**Laying aside His power and glory,  
Humbly He entered our world.**

**Chose the path of meanest worth:  
Scandal of a virgin birth.**

**Born in a stable, cold and rejected:  
Here lies the hope of the world.**

**Fullness of grace, the love of the Father  
Shown in the face of Jesus.**

**Stooping to bear the weight of humanity,  
Walking the Calvary road.**

**Christ the holy Innocent  
Took our sin and punishment.**

**Fullness of God, despised and rejected:  
Crushed for the sins of the world.**

**Fullness of hope in Christ we had longed for,  
Promise of God in Jesus.**

**Through His obedience we are forgiven,  
Opening the floodgates of heaven.**

**All our hopes and dreams we bring  
Gladly as an offering.**

**Fullness of life and joy unspeakable:  
God's gift in love to the world.**

## READING: JOHN 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light

shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

### REFLECTION: A FRESH START – The Word made flesh

'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14).

Today we come to the sentence that deserves a sermon of its own, a sentence which is the reason why John wrote his gospel. So far John has told us of the Word which created the world, the Word which is Reason bringing order to the world. These two ideas were familiar to both Jew and Gentile. But John now says something that would have startled and amazed both. The Word became a person who was seen by John and others. 'We have seen his glory' wrote John. The word John uses for 'seen' is the word used of physical sight. Jesus was not a spiritual vision or an illusion of a person. John says the Word actually came to earth in human form and was seen by human eyes. John here is saying that if

you want to see God's creative and Reasoning Word, look at Jesus of Nazareth.

In this verse John parted company with much religious philosophy that had gone before. For God to become human was impossible in the mind of a Greek. In Greek understanding, the body was evil, a prison in which the soul was held captive. And to Roman thought the body was to be despised in comparison with the spirit. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius noted, "Therefore despise the flesh... The composition of the whole body is under corruption." So in this verse an amazing new thing was being said – that God could become human and enter into the life we live, that God could enter time and people could actually see him.

John says 'The Word became flesh.' In Greek the word 'flesh' is the word 'sarx'. Paul used this word many times to describe human nature in all its weakness and liability to sin. The thought of taking this word and applying it to God was extraordinary. So amazing was this concept that even some in the Church found this too much to believe, and there arose a group called the Docetists (dokein – to seem). They believed that Jesus only appeared to be human but his body was not real. They believed Jesus was a spirit appearing as a person. Therefore he could not feel hunger or pain, did not get weary or know sorrow. John was very clear in his first letter about such a view. He writes, 'This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God' (1 John 4:2-3). The Docetic heresy was born partly out of reverence for Christ, and partly out of the mistaken belief that the physical world is evil. If the physical world is evil and Christ was without sin, then they believed Christ's body wasn't physical.

Can you see the danger of this view? If Jesus wasn't fully human, it contradicted the whole of the gospel; it denied the incarnation of Christ, the atonement through his death on the cross, it

denied his bodily resurrection and his physical ascension. In other words, it denied all that matters to our faith.

It was Ignatius of Antioch who declared: “[Jesus] was then truly born, truly grew up, truly ate and drank, was truly crucified, and died, and rose again.” The Docetic heresy was repudiated by the first Council of Nicaea in 325AD, and by subsequent ecumenical councils. The church has always defended that Jesus was both divine and human. We must hold to this truth. Without it the gospel is robbed of its power.

It is important to know the faith which we hold. There are many people in our society who do not believe that Jesus really existed – that he is just a myth. It is important that we know where we can point people when showing that Jesus lived, that he took our human nature in order to show us God’s grace and truth. And there is no better place than to point them to John 1:14.

Jesus shows us God’s love which we could never earn or deserve – that’s grace. Jesus shows us God’s truth. He is the embodiment of truth. Truth isn’t something abstract but something which may be known with the mind, accepted with the heart and shown in our lives. Jesus Christ was full of grace and truth.

So what does all that mean for us today?

It means that the world is good, physical matter is not evil. In the beginning God looked at the world he made and said it was good. Physical matter is not evil. Lily Howard got it right in her picture she sent in last week. Well done Lily. I don’t expect Lily realised she was doing theology with that picture.

It means that Jesus didn’t simply seem to be a person, was a person, flesh and blood like you and me. In writing his gospel John tells us that Jesus walked and talked and ate with people, he wept with people; he got tired and was hungry. He knows what it is like to be human because he was human. And he suffered a human death,

bleeding and dying on the cross. Witnesses then saw him risen from the dead, they saw him and touched him. This means when you are going through tough times you can come to him and know he understands, for he experienced what we experience.

It also means that if we want to know what God is like we have to look at Jesus. As John says ‘We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.’ In the Old Testament the bright cloud of God’s presence settled on the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled it (Exodus 24:16; 40:34-35). The glory of the Lord was the visible manifestation of God. Now John was telling his readers that God has revealed his glory once again but in the person of his Son, the Word made flesh.

When the athlete Jonathan Edwards won the triple-jump in the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000, he was presented with the gold medal and rejoiced in hearing the National Anthem. Then he returned to the changing room he thought to himself ‘That’s it. The glory is over.’ He later said in an interview that the glory was so fleeting. One minute you’re being cheered by the vast crowds, the next minute you’re sitting alone in the locker room. However, Jesus’ glory is not fleeting. It is eternal. It was displayed in his ‘signs’, such as the turning of water into wine. But his true glory was displayed fully in his death and resurrection. This is where the glory of God was fully seen.

And in his prayer in Gethsemane, as he prayed for all believers, Jesus said, “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.” In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, may we all know that our unity is one key way we give glory to Jesus today, by loving each other, by serving Christ in our everyday lives, by seeing our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ as allies not rivals. Let’s pray.

#### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Lord of life, you have created the world and made every person in your image. We give thanks for

the diversity of life on this planet. We thank you for the richness we enjoy through the many expressions of culture, faith and love. Give us the courage to love what you love.

Wonderful God **Reveal in us your glory**

Incarnate Lord, you came among us, becoming like us and sharing in our joys and sorrows. We give thanks that you have revealed your glory supremely at the cross. We pray for all who are seeking to know you, that they may find you and may follow you.

Wonderful God **Reveal in us your glory**

Lord of the Church, you have called your family into being and made us one in Christ. We give thanks for the diversity within the Church. Teach us to value the gifts each tradition has to offer, that we may see you in one another.

Wonderful God **Reveal in us your glory**

Lord of the cross, you unite us all in our need for salvation. We give thanks for our fellow believers who are not afraid to call you Lord, despite the threat to their lives. We pray for all believers who are imprisoned for their faith, for those in hiding, and for the families of those who have been killed for their faith.

Wonderful God **Reveal in us your glory**

Lord of the past, present and future, you hold us all in the palm of your hand. We thank you for those we love but see no longer. We pray for Mike Acaster and family following the death of his mother this week. Enfold Mike and Jan and family in your peace. We thank you for the communion of saints where your family in heaven and on earth is united in Christ. May we all know ourselves to be held by your love now and always.

Wonderful God **Reveal in us your glory**

All these things we pray in the name of the Son who came to save us and show forth the glory of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**SONG: The Light of the World**

(with Celtic instrumental)

<https://youtu.be/u7uZkiEALDw>

The Light of the World Made history begin,  
Spoke time into being, caused planets to spin;  
Flung galaxies wide through infinite space  
To sing of His splendour and fathomless grace.

The Light of the World now shone as a man,  
And walked through the valleys  
He'd carved with His hands.  
A servant to those He'd breathed into life,  
He felt our injustice and shared in our strife.

Come, come, daughters and sons,  
Look to the Light of the World.  
Sing, sing praises to Him.  
Simply believe, you will receive  
Mercy and love without measure.

The Light of the World preached justice for all,  
Defying the proud and defending the poor;  
Then humbled Himself to death on a cross,  
To crush the oppressor and rescue the lost.  
Come, come, daughters and sons,  
Look to the Light of the World.  
Sing, sing praises to Him.  
Simply believe, you will receive  
Mercy and love without measure.

The Light of the World still shines on the earth,  
With gifts of forgiveness, the hope of new birth.  
So open your heart, don't hide in the night;  
Step out of the darkness and into His light.

Come, come, daughters and sons...  
Look to the Light of the World.  
Sing, sing praises to Him.  
Simply believe, you will receive  
Mercy and love without measure (repeat chorus)  
Mercy and love without measure.

**THE PEACE**

The Lord calls us to unity. He gives us his peace and invites us to share it. The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also, with you.**

Let us share the peace with those around us.

### HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord is here.

**His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is right to praise you, Father, Lord of all creation; in your love you made us for yourself. When we turned away you did not reject us but came to meet us in your Son.

**You embraced us as your children and welcomed us to sit and eat with you.**

In Christ you shared our life that we might live in him and he in us.

**He opened his arms of love upon the cross and made for all the perfect sacrifice for sin.**

On the night he was betrayed, at supper with his friends he took bread, and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to them, saying: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

**Father, we do this in remembrance of him: his body is the bread of life.**

At the end of supper, taking the cup of wine, he gave you thanks, and said: Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins; do this in remembrance of me.

**Father, we do this in remembrance of him: his blood is shed for all.**

As we proclaim his death and celebrate his rising in glory, send your Holy Spirit that this bread and this wine may be to us the body and blood of your dear Son.

**As we eat and drink these holy gifts make us one in Christ, our risen Lord.**

With your whole Church throughout the world we offer you this sacrifice of praise and lift our voice to join the eternal song of heaven:  
**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

**Lead us not into temptation**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

### BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, **we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

The Body of Christ keep you in eternal life  
The Blood of Christ keep you in eternal life

### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Through him we offer you our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.**

### SONG: LORD OF THE CHURCH

[https://youtu.be/2Z\\_U5\\_ktdw](https://youtu.be/2Z_U5_ktdw)

Lord of the church, we pray for our renewing:  
Christ over all, our undivided aim;  
Fire of the Spirit, burn for our ending,  
Wind of the Spirit, fan the living flame!  
We turn to Christ amid our fear and failing,  
The will that lacks the courage to be free,  
The weary labours, all but unavailing,  
To bring us nearer what a church should be.

Lord of the church, we seek a Father's blessing,  
A true repentance and a faith restored,  
A swift obedience and a new possessing,  
Filled with the Holy Spirit of the Lord!  
We turn to Christ from all our restless striving,  
Unnumbered voices with a single prayer:  
The living water for our souls' reviving,  
In Christ to live, and love and serve and care.

Lord of the church, we long for our uniting,  
True to one calling, by one vision stirred;  
One cross proclaiming and one creed reciting,  
One in the truth of Jesus and his word!  
So lead us on; till toil and trouble ended,  
One church triumphant one new song shall sing,  
To praise his glory, risen and ascended,  
Christ over all, the everlasting King!

### **CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING**

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and all whom you love, now and for evermore. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
In the name of Christ. Amen.