

Christmas Service 2025 - St Paul's Cooma 25 December 2025

Welcome

Bondi Candle

Advent Candles Collect

Jesus came to be the light of the world, and there is a tradition in many churches that we light candles during Advent, the month leading up to Christmas.

Almighty God of light and life - let the first candle remind us of the hope we have that Jesus will return again to restore the world to the way it was meant to be. Let the second candle remind us of your love in sending your prophets and John the Baptist to prepare us when Jesus first came in Bethlehem. Let the third candle remind us of the joy that Jesus brings into our lives, and the fourth candle to peace that Jesus, the prince of peace, will bring to the world. Let the final candle remind us always of Jesus, your Son, our Lord, who came to die and rise again to save the world. Amen.

Carol - O Come all ye faithful - TIS 304

O Come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, Born the King of angels;

CHORUS

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

God of God, Light of Light,
lo, He abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten not created *Chorus*

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God, glory in the highest *Chorus*

Yea Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning
Jesus to thee be glory given
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing *Chorus*

Sentence of Scripture

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). Matthew 1:22-23

The Two Great Commandments

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Prayer of preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: as your servant John the Baptist came to prepare people for the coming of your son Jesus, so cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Shepherds Quiz

Which Old Testament king was a shepherd? David 1 Sam 17:20, Ps 78

Were there any female shepherds in the bible? Rachel (before she became Jacob's wife)

Which prophet was also a shepherd? Amos

Who is most often compared to a shepherd in the Bible (bonus points for Bible references) - God Psalm 23, Jesus John 10:14.

Reading 1 - Luke 2:1-15

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Bible Reading 2 - Isaiah 9:2-7

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

³ You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Carol - While Shepherds watched their flocks - TIS 299

1 While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground, an angel of the Lord came down and glory shone around.

2 'Fear not,' said he (for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind), 'glad tidings of great joy I bring you and all humankind.

3 'To you in David's town this day is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord; and this shall be the sign:

4 'the heavenly babe you there shall find to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swaddling clothes and in a manger laid.'

5 Thus spoke the seraph; and forthwith appeared a shining throng
of angels, praising God, who thus addressed their joyful song:

6 'All glory be to God on high, and to the world be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven to earth, begin and never cease.

Quiz - Angels

What was the name of the angel who told Mary she was pregnant with Jesus? Gabriel
(Luke 1:26)

What other messages did Gabriel bring people? He interpreted a dream for the prophet Daniel (Daniel 8:15, 22), He told Zechariah he would have a Son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:19)

What is the most common response when you see an angel? Obeyed - I found over 30 references to people seeing angels, only 8 of them does the Bible say they were afraid (or the angel told them not to be afraid), the vast majority say that they simply obeyed. Now a reading about angels.

Bible Reading - Luke 2:15-21

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The

shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Message - Shepherds and Angels

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Intercessions

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. 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.

The Confession

Knowing the goodness of God and our failure to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins, saying together:

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love, but we have broken your holy laws and have left undone what we ought to have done.

We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them. For the sake of your Son who died for us, forgive us, cleanse us and change us. By your Holy Spirit, enable us to live for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is slow to anger and full of compassion, forgiving all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. God therefore forgives you in Christ Jesus, in whom there is no condemnation. **Amen.**

Greeting of peace

We are the body of Christ. His Spirit is with us.

The peace of the Lord be always with you. And also with you.

Carol - Hark the herald angels sing TIS 303

1 Hark! the herald angels sing, glory to the new-born King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all you nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim, 'Christ is born in Bethlehem'.

Refrain:

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
glory to the new-born King.*

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come, offspring of a Virgin's womb:
veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity,
pleased in human flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel. [Refrain]

3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings:
mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more need die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. [Refrain]

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, O Lord of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share.
Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God forever.

The Great Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, making us in your own image. We praise you for your son, our saviour Jesus Christ, who by his death on the cross and rising to new life offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people. Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

And now, gracious God, we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, and pray that we who receive them in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit according to our Saviour's word, in remembrance of his suffering and death, may share his body and his blood.

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying 'Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you.

We who are many are one body in Christ,

for we all share in the one bread.

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying 'Drink from this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

We eat this bread and drink this cup **to proclaim the death of the Lord.**

We do this until he returns. **Come, Lord Jesus Come!**

Father, as we recall his saving death and glorious resurrection, may we who share these gifts be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and united in the body of your Son. Bring us with all your

people into the joy of your eternal kingdom, there to feast at your table and join in your eternal praise.

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever. Amen

After Communion

Gracious God, thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love, and that we are living members of Christ's body. **Amen**

Father, **We offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen**

Carol - Joy to the world - TIS 268

1 Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
let earth receive its king;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;
let us our songs employ;
while fields and streams, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Notices

Blessing

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 among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Dismissal

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

Cooma Anglican Christmas 2025 Sermon shepherds and angels -

Luke 2:1-21

This morning I want to talk about two groups of witnesses of the baby Jesus, shepherds and angels.

Our passage says the group of shepherds was living in the fields looking after their sheep. I presume this meant that they were not particularly well off. Sleeping in the fields looking after sheep does not strike me as the most lucrative of occupations, and not something people are likely to do when there are easier alternatives.

I understand that first-century shepherds lived a rugged, nomadic life, constantly moving flocks to pasture, sleeping outdoors in sheepfolds (which were usually caves or stone pens) to guard against wolves and thieves, and enduring harsh weather (scorching sun, cold nights). It is likely many were social outcasts with low status, and were often considered dishonest, though they were essential for providing sheep for the temple sacrifices. Many would not even own the sheep they shepherded, but herded sheep for a wealthy owner, who required them to make good any losses to predators, the weather or thieves. Their days were spent leading sheep to grass and water, and nights involved watchful shifts, relying on simple tools like a staff, rod, and sling for protection.

As I mentioned earlier, there were some well known shepherds in the Bible, most prominently king David, but also Rachel and the prophet Amos. Perhaps most well known, although we don't know their names or anything else about them, were the shepherds who visited the baby Jesus not long after he was born.

I often wondered why God chose the shepherds to be the first, after Mary and Joseph, to see the incarnate Jesus. Why did God choose social outcasts with low status, and who were often considered dishonest? It seems these reasons include:

Inclusion of the Poor: God chose the socially outcast and poor shepherds, rather than powerful rulers, to announce the Saviour, highlighting that the Gospel is for "all the people," not just the influential.

Foreshadowing Jesus as the Good Shepherd: Their occupation as protectors of sheep foreshadowed Jesus' future role as the "Good Shepherd" who cares for His flock (God's people).

First Witnesses & Evangelists: They were the first human witnesses to the Christ child, immediately believing and then spreading the miraculous news,

becoming the first to proclaim the gospel, rather than the intellectuals of scholars you might expect.

Universal Message: The shepherds, representing the common people, receiving the news alongside the later visit of the *Gentile Magi* (wise men). This symbolizes the Christian message extending to the entire world.

Transformation from Fear to Joy: The angelic announcement replaced the shepherds' terror with overwhelming joy and wonder. This is a core theme of the Christmas message, and led them to praise God.

In essence, the shepherds' visit established Jesus' mission from the start: a humble Savior for everyone, a message of hope that begins with the overlooked and spreads outward to the whole world.

Jumping ahead for a moment, once the shepherds had heard what the angels were telling them, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. They spread the word concerning what had been told them by the angels about this child,¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. The shepherds responded in the most natural way possible to these extraordinary circumstances - they told everyone they could, and they glorified and praised God.

Our familiarity with the story of Jesus's birth often blinds us to what God was doing, but the simple shepherds, personally experiencing it, grasped the enormity of what God was doing, and they praised and worshiped Him, as was only right!

I now want to move on to the second group from our passage, the angels.

First the angel Gabriel alone appears to the shepherds, and then they see a great multitude. But what is an angel?

At the very least, an angel is a messenger of God. Angel simply means messenger, but angels in the Bible are usually powerful spiritual beings. The letter to Colossians tells us they are created by God and are part of created order. As creatures with a special relationship to God, Angels worship God, praising Him for his glory as they see it far more clearly than humans.

Often in the Old Testament, and sometimes in the New, angels look just like normal human beings, but sometimes they take on non-human form, sometimes with wings. When they appeared to the shepherds in Luke, the glory of the Lord shone from them around the shepherds. Their appearance often makes their

witnesses afraid, and the shepherds were indeed terrified. On 5 or so visitations in the Bible, the first thing the angels tell their witnesses is not to be afraid, and a few others explicitly stated the witnesses were terrified.

As I said, the most important thing is that they are God's messengers. Their specific message to the shepherds was *good news that will cause great joy for all the people.* ¹¹ *Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.* ¹² *This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.*

Breaking this down, the town of David was Bethlehem, a small town about 8km south of Jerusalem, and the birthplace of King David. The prophet Micah had prophesied: ² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are 'from of old', from ancient times." Micah 5:2

The angel said a saviour had been born there on that day. We don't know what the shepherds understood by saviour - perhaps they thought that the one born would save Israel from their Roman occupiers, or perhaps they thought he would save mankind from sin and death. This latter is why Jesus came.

They also described the child as the Messiah - the anointed, or chosen one. Messiah is the Hebrew word, and it translates to Christ in Greek. Christ isn't Jesus's surname, it's a title or description. The Old Testament includes numerous prophecies about the Messiah who was to come to save God's people. However, prior to Jesus, it was difficult to see, prior to Jesus, how they all came together, but they do in Jesus.

The child is also described as the Lord. This also could have different meanings or implications. It can just mean "Lord and Master" - someone who has authority over you. However the Jews also used the term Lord to refer to God. They didn't want to use God's personal name that he told Moses to avoid the risk of misusing it, so whenever God's name, Yahweh, came up in their Bibles, they would substitute "The Lord". In our Old Testaments you will often see LORD written in all capitals, and this indicates where the Hebrew says Yahweh, God's name.

Gabriel said that the shepherds would recognise the one they were talking about because he would be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. The cloths simply meant that he was a new born infant, but a manger was an animal's food trough, which was a lot less usual. No one who had a choice would put their newborn to bed in a food trough, but since there was no proper accommodation

for Mary and Joseph, Jesus's earthly parents, this would uniquely identify Jesus to the Shepherds.

After saying this, suddenly a great company of the heavenly host (that is angels) appeared with the angel Gabriel, praising God and saying,¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." As I mentioned, angels worship God, and as they recognised what God was doing by sending his Son Jesus into the world as Saviour of his people - those on whom his favour rests, they cannot help themselves but praise and worship him.

So, Luke tells us of both ends of creation - humble shepherds and glorious angels, both praising and worshiping God for what on the outside simply seemed to be another human baby being born into impoverished circumstances, lying in an animal's food trough - not even an inn, and well short of the palace they should have expected.

Jesus has come to save all who would put their trust in him, from the poor to the most influential. By appearing to protectors of sheep he foreshadowed his role as the "Good Shepherd" who cares for His flock (for God's people). The shepherds were the first human witnesses to the Christ child and immediately believed and were the first to proclaim the gospel, and the angelic announcement replaced the shepherds' terror with overwhelming joy and wonder, leading them to praise and worship God.

This Christmas, we should recognise what the shepherds and the angels recognised, that God was doing what was truly wondrous and remarkable. Not only has it been prophesied hundreds of years before in the Old Testament, but by sending his own Son, truly God and truly human, to the world to save it from our sin and death, we too should praise God. As Jesus he and we come to see how he heals the sick, feeds the multitudes and ultimately dies on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for our sins, we, like the angels and the shepherds need to put our trust in him, to praise him and proclaim this, the greatest news possible, to all who will hear.

Will you do that this Christmas?