# Mustard Bush Faith Community Christmas, Epiphany, Candlemas



**Coptic Icon of the Nativity** 

# We Gather as God's People

We assemble in silence, praying, lighting candles and contemplating the icons.

#### The embodier says:

Let our prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of our hands as an evening sacrifice.

Psalm 141:2

We stand as the embodier honours the holy things and the holy people (the living Icons) with incense and bowing, and remain standing for the Call to Worship.

## Call to Worship

Blessed is the Holy Trinity of Love, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, One God and Mother of us all; and blessed is the reign of God, now and ever and to the ages of ages.

Amen.

In the beginning, the Word already was: the Word was in God's presence, and what God was, the Word was.

All things came into being through the Word, in whom was life; this life was the light of all.

The light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a parent's only child, full of grace and truth.

Adapted from the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (4th century), and incorporating the wording of the baptismal formula of the Riverside Church, New York City

St John 1:1, 4,14
What the New
Testament says of the
Word (Logos), the
books of the Greek
Old Testament say of
the Wisdom (Sophia)
of God

#### The Paschal Candle is lit; we remain standing.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light no darkness can defeat.

St John 8:12; 1:4

A welcome is given, especially to guests.

Seasonal songs, or songs of praise or invocation, may be sung.

## Litany of Peace

All creation sings praises to you, for you have revealed yourself.

You, O God, have appeared on earth and have dwelt among us.

Peace of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom Excerpt from Great Blessing of Water, Feast of the Theophany

Inspired by the Litany of

Yet creation still groans in labour; so joining our voices with sun, moon and stars, tree and plain, desert and bush; the sea and its inhabitants, with all creatures wild and tame, let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

For the Turabal people, who came first to this place, and for all faithful custodians of the earth, let us pray to the Lord:
(sung twice)

#### Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

For all who know their need of others: for children and old people everywhere, the infirm and disabled, the lonely and bereaved, let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

Dona nobis pacem, Domine: 'Grant us peace, O Lord.' We yearn for the peace promised by the angels For all who share life with others: for parents and carers, teachers, artists, healers, peacemakers and reconcilers, and those who seek to renew the face of the earth; let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

#### Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

For those who complete the afflictions of Christ, whose suffering seems without end: who lack food, shelter, work and dignity, and suffer the violence of the proud; for all who cry for justice day and night, let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

For all in authority: those who require wisdom and restraint, and all who serve those in need, keeping them from harm; let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

#### Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

With the whole Church, from Moreton Bay to the ends of the earth; with each one gathered here in prayer, with absent brothers and sisters, that we may be renewed in the faith of Christ, let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

Colossians 1:24

With God's faithful servants of every time and place, with apostles, prophets, saints and martyrs, with all who have gone before, who inspire, guide and encourage us, let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

#### Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

With Holy Mary the God-bearer, John the Evangelist, Stephen, the Holy Innocents, Simeon and Anna, Prisca and Mary of Magdala, let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

'God-bearer', at the Council of Chalcedon in 451

St Mary was affirmed

as the Theotokos,

The names of the saints whose festivals fall in this week may be added at appropriate points

#### Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

With Brigid, Columba and Hilda, Thomas Becket, John Wyclif, Francis and Clare, Hildegard, Julian and George Fox, let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

## Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

With Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Oscar Romero, Josephine Butler, Mary MacKillop and Lazarus Lamilami, let us pray to the Lord: (sung twice)

## Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

And with the faithful ones whose names we call on now:

An opportunity for anyone to name out loud someone whose life and faith have inspired their own.

With these and the whole cloud of witnesses — all who have died in the hope of resurrection, let us pray to the Lord:

Hebrews 12:1

(sung twice)

Dona nobis pacem, Domine.

## A Song of Ascents

#### We may stand as the water is brought to the Table.

Cf. Psalms 120-134, the 'Songs of Ascents', which may have been chanted by pilgrims as they went up to Jerusalem.

Blessed are you, O God, and blessed is the eternal Word, at whose appearing in the body the earth was sanctified, the water blessed, the heaven illumined, and humankind delivered from the bitter tyranny of the enemy. (sung twice)

May we see Christ's loving face, may we be an icon of his grace.

Send your Holy Spirit among us, that we might follow the star of hope, reflect the bright beams of grace and truth, and offer our gifts wherever we find the Christ. (sung twice)

May we see Christ's loving face, may we be an icon of his grace.

Shine your light on us like the blazing sun, withering all that is trivial and false, forcing our roots deeper into your mercy, and driving us to seek rest and replenishment in the drenching evening showers of Christ's love. (sung twice)

May we see Christ's loving face, may we be an icon of his grace.

Long ago, God spoke to our forebears many times and in many ways: by the prophets, but in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, whom God appointed heir to all things, through whom God created the worlds;

From an Orthodox Epiphany hymn who is God's Wisdom, reflection of eternal light, pure and radiant stream of the glory of God — nothing impure is found in her.

Wisdom 7:25-26

How then can we approach God, defiled as we are?

By the free gift of God's grace, all who receive the Word of God receive power to become children of God.

Ephesians 2:8

St John 1:12

Who then are those favoured to enter?
From what rank or class will they be chosen?
All who are baptised into Christ
have put on Christ.
Now there is neither black nor white,
there is neither slave nor free,
there is neither male nor female.
For we are all one in Christ.

Galatians 3:27-28

Water is sprinkled over us as a reminder of our identity as those baptised into union with Christ.

#### Confession

We may kneel for the Prayer of Confession.

O God, you search us out and know us, and all that we are is open to you. We confess that we have sinned. (sung)

Psalm 139:1

#### **Kyrie eleison**

Holy Mary accepted your call to be the mother of Jesus. Forgive our disobedience to your will. (sung)

The Kyrie eleison appears in early Greek liturgies, and in the West from the 5th century

**Kyrie eleison** 

Kyrie eleison: Lord, have mercy / grant a new start / give peace / grant healing / pour out your grace / give the power to do what we cannot otherwise do Christ our Saviour was laid in straw, in the company of cattle. Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways. (sung)

#### **Kyrie eleison**

The shepherds left their flocks to go to Bethlehem. Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision. (sung)

#### **Kyrie eleison**

The magi followed the star and found a king in a stable. Forgive our reluctance to go where you may be found. (sung)

#### **Kyrie eleison**

Simeon and Anna waited with patience for the revealing of Christ. Forgive our unyielding haste. (sung)

#### **Kyrie eleison**

We confess your grace, O Christ, perfect union of Spirit and flesh: we proclaim your mercy; we do not hide your gracious deeds. By your birth you set free our mortal nature.

Excerpt from *Great*Blessing of Water,

Feast of the

Theophany

## Declaration of Forgiveness

We stand as a declaration of God's mercy is proclaimed. This is based on the Lectionary for the previous Sunday. As we sing a Doxology, in turn around the circle we break from the singing, and declare God's forgiveness to one another by tracing the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the next person and saying:

Sister/Brother, your sins are forgiven; be at peace.

#### Canticle

#### Adapted from St Ephrem (Nativity 11:6-8)

Your mother, O Lord, is a cause for wonder; you joined yourself to her and became a servant; the Word entered and became silent within her; thunder entered and made no sound; the Shepherd of all entered, and in her became the Lamb, bleating as he came forth.

Your mother's womb has reversed the roles: the Establisher of all entered in richness, but came forth in poverty; the Exalted One entered, but came forth in meekness; the Majestic One entered, but came forth in lowliness.

The Mighty One entered, and put on insecurity from her womb; the Provider of all entered and experienced hunger; the One who gives drink to all entered and experienced thirst; naked and stripped there came forth from her the One who clothes all.

The poet-theologian St Ephrem the Syrian lived c. 306-373

## We Wait for God's Word

#### Please stand.

Sisters and brothers, the Word of God became flesh, God's Wisdom the fruit of a woman's womb.

The embodier brings the Bible to the Table, and says,

'The Wisdom of God.'

We respond,

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care: Come and show your people the way to salvation.

Vespers antiphon

The embodier continues,

O God, your mysteries, discerned in wisdom by men and women through the centuries, have been etched in sacred places and recorded in holy books.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us, that your Word may take root in the secret places of our hearts and bear much fruit to your glory.

The Readings normally follow the Lectionary for the previous Sunday.

First Reading

Psalm

The Psalm is a response to and meditation upon the First Reading

Second Reading

#### One of the Responses below may follow the Second Reading:

Teach us wisdom, O God; let your word bring us light.

Open our eyes, O God, to the beauty of your word. May our lips and our lives unite to serve you.

Your word, O God, is a lamp to our feet; a light to our path.

May your word live in us, O God, and bear much fruit to your glory.

## Gospel Reading

#### Please stand. The Embodier says:

The Word became flesh through Mary's 'Yes':
Hail, Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
(sung twice)

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint ... **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.** 

The Gospel is read.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. (sung twice)

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

The embodier may kiss the Bible.

Part of the *Ave Maria* ('Hail Mary'), which originated towards the end of the 11th century

Kissing the Bible is an ancient custom, one kept by Zwingli in Zurich

#### The Sermon of Stillness

Lest the Word of life be lost, let us allow God to confront us in the sound of sheer silence.

1 Kings 19:12

Let us learn from Mary, who pondered your word in her heart. Like a child rests in its mother's arms, so will I rest in you.

St Luke 2:19, 51

Psalm 131:2

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Like a child rests in its mother's arms, so will I rest in you.

Psalm 139:1-2, 6

We observe ten minutes of silence for contemplation and reflection, for meditation upon an icon or prayer (e.g., the Jesus Prayer). During this time, we sit or kneel as we are comfortable.

# The Preaching of the Word

## A Statement of Faith

#### Please stand.

Let us confess our faith:

We believe in God, holy Source of all that is. We believe in God, who has spoken the eternal Word in Jesus Christ. We believe in God, ceaselessly breathing the Spirit into creation.

The Church's trinitarian faith in a contemporary form

We trust in God's love and wisdom: fully revealed in the humanity of Jesus Christ, present to us through the Spirit's working in the Church and beyond.

We believe that God is calling the whole creation into a future of justice and peace.
We share in Christ's risen life, and commit ourselves today to receive the coming reign of God.
To the only God, Three yet One, be all honour and glory and praise now and for ever. Amen.

## A Time for Sharing

We share our lives in celebration, conversation and concern.

## The Prayers of the People

The tray and tapers are placed on the Table, and a taper is lit from the Paschal Candle.

The eternal Word became flesh in Jesus Christ: we have received grace upon grace.

St John 1:14-16

In this confidence, let us pray ...

During this time, we may light tapers and place them in the tray as we pray.

We pray for one another; for the mission of the Church; for the world.

After the Prayers, the Sentence is repeated:

The eternal Word became flesh in Jesus Christ: we have received grace upon grace.

# We Celebrate the Lord's Supper

#### Please stand.

#### The Peace

The angels sang: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, good will to all.

St Luke 2:14

The peace of the Human One be always with you. **And also with you.** 

We pass the Peace clasping both hands.

## Setting the Table

The Paten, Chalice and Offering bowl are placed upon the Table.

For God so loved the world, the Word became not words but flesh. Come to this holy meal: Christ bids you come to the table of plenty. Taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are they who trust in God.

Psalm 34:8

#### An Offering is received.

God of all creation, you bring forth bread from the earth and fruit from the vine.
By your Holy Spirit, this bread and wine will be for us the Body and Blood of Christ.

All you have made is good. Your love endures for ever.

## The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also with you.

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.

The Preface is based on lectionary Scriptures.

Those who wish may raise their hands with the Presider.

Therefore, with the whole realm of nature around us, with earth, sea and sky, **We sing to you.** 

With the angels and archangels who surround us, with all the saints before us and beside us, with brothers and sisters, east and west, north and south, We sing to you.

And with our loved ones, separate from us now, who yet, in this mystery are close to us, **We sing the hymn of neverending praise:** 

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of truth and light, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed, the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

The Opening Dialogue (Sursum Corda, 'Lift up your hearts') was used as early as 215 in the West and 350 in the East.

This *orans* position was typical of early Christian practice.

'The One': Jesus Christ Blessed are you, O God, and marvellous are your works; words are not enough to sing the praises of your wonders.

These stanzas contain excerpts from the *Great Blessing of Water*, Feast of the Theophany

All the spiritual powers tremble before you; the sun praises you; the moon glorifies you; the stars in their courses meet with you; the light hears you; the depths shudder with awe before you; the springs of water do your bidding.

Yet, though boundless and beginningless and unutterable, you came down on earth. Through your servant Mary Jesus took the form of a servant, being made in human likeness; Christ became obedient to death, even death on a cross; Christ is exalted over all.

Philippians 2:5-11

Blessed is Christ, your Child, embodied forever in creation; on the night he was betrayed, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said: 'This is my Body, which is for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.'

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, whenever you drink it, for the remembrance of me.'

So, as we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we remember Jesus' death.
We proclaim Christ risen.
We await the full revealing of incarnate Love.

Therefore, here in this place, we celebrate the life that was born at Bethlehem, the life that Jesus has shared among his community through the ages, and shares with us now.

Made one with Christ, and thus one with each other, we lay before you these gifts of bread and wine, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, for here we offer and present to you ourselves, our bodies, minds and spirits, to be a holy and continual sacrifice to you.

Hebrews 13:15

Romans 12:1

Come, Holy Spirit, brood over this bread and this wine. May they be for us the Body and Blood of Christ, vibrant with life, healing, renewing and making us whole.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Spirit of Jesus,
embrace us with your life-giving power,
that as bread and wine are made one with us,
we may become one with you,
bone of your bone,
flesh of your flesh,
living our prayer
and praying our life
until love and loyalty embrace,
peace and justice kiss,
and all are free as Christ is free.

Psalm 85:10

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.** 

## The Lord's Prayer

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us, let us pray in faith and trust:

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 Breaking of the Bread

Christ is the Bread of life,
Child of Mary, Child of God.
Christ is the Cup of salvation,
humbled for a time, now revealed to all.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

May we who share these gifts
be found in Christ
and Christ in us.

#### Lamb of God

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.

## Pre-Communion Prayer

You have smitten us with yearning, O Christ, and by your divine love you have changed us; but consume our sins by immaterial fire, and make us worthy to delight in you; that we may leap for joy, Gracious One, and magnify your first and second comings.

St John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7; Revelation 5:6ff

The Agnus Dei ('Lamb of God') was introduced into the West in the 7th century. Its use was continued by the Reformers

Adapted from a pre-communion prayer of the Orthodox Church

We pass the Bread and Wine to one another, saying appropriate words, such as:

'The Body/Blood of Christ, broken/shed for you.'
'The Body/Blood of Christ keep you in eternal life.'
'Christ, the Bread of heaven.'
'Christ, the true Vine.'
'The Body/Blood of Christ is given to (name),
for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.'

#### Prayer after Communion

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: your word has been fulfilled.

My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people:

a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel. Amen.

The Nunc Dimittis
(St Luke 2:29-32)
is the Song of
Simeon, and has
been used in
worship since the
fourth century

# We go to the Liturgy beyond the Liturgy

## Dispersal and Blessing

Mysterious God, confounding our expectations, meeting us where we least expect to find you, **Stay with us now.** 

Child of the manger, healing our pain, sharing our weakness, **Stay with us now.** 

Spirit of hope, birth of God within our lives, **Stay with us now.** 

Stay with us in our frailty, stay with us on our journey, Walk beside us, live within us, Lead us to glory, lead us home.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the magi, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, the patience of Simeon and Anna, and the blessing of the Christ-child be yours this night, and evermore; and the blessing of the Holy Trinity of Love be upon you, now and ever and to the ages of ages:

Amen.

Glory to you, our God, glory to you.

## Acknowledgements

Members of the Mustard Bush Faith Community gratefully acknowledge our dependence upon the liturgy of the South Yarra Community Baptist Church, which was sourced, edited and arranged by Nathan Nettleton and Garry Deverell in consultation with the members of that congregation (© 2001)

#### Call to Worship

Adapted from the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (4th century), and incorporating the wording of the baptismal formula of the Riverside Church, New York City

#### Litany of Peace

Adapted from a litany written by Nathan Nettleton, itself in the style of the Litany of Peace of the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom

Introduction: from Georges Lemopoulos, (ed.), Let Us Pray to the Lord, Geneva: wcc, 1996, p. 17 (alt.)

'Dona Nobis Pacem': ©1991 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

#### Song of Ascents

Adapted from Nathan Nettleton, and an excerpt from the *Great Blessing of Water*, Feast of Theophany

'Icon of Grace': © 1992 Trisha Watts

Confession / Declaration of Forgiveness
Text mainly from *The Promise of His Glory*, © 1990, 1991 The
Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, p. 166 (alt.)

Kyrie eleison, trad.; music © 1991 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

Jubilate Deo, Michael Praetorius, (1571-1621); music © 1991 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

#### Canticle

Georges Lemopoulos, op. cit., p.77; Isabel Hapgood, *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church*, © 1996 Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, p. 194 (alt.) The Service of the Word

'O Lord, your mysteries': Nathan Nettleton, incorporating lines from 'The Seven Stages of Resurrection' by Philip Newell, *An Earthful of Glory*, London: SPCK, 1996, p. 174

Gloria, traditional; music © Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

A Statement of Faith Paul Walton

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper The Peace: trad. (alt.)

The Setting of the Table: A New Zealand Prayer Book—He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, © The Church of the Province of New Zealand, 1989, p. 467

Sursum Corda: © 1988 ELLC (English Language Liturgical Consultation)

Sanctus and Benedictus: © 1988 ELLC (alt.)

Sources for The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving: Nathan Nettleton

The *Iona Community Worship Book*, Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1991, p. 67

Janet Morley, All Desires Known, London: SPCK, 1992, p. 47ff (alt.) The Breaking of the Bread: Paul Walton; Uniting in Worship, © 1988, 1998 The Working Group on Worship, p. 126; A New Zealand Prayer Book—He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, p. 472

Lord's Prayer: © 1988 ELLC

Agnus Dei: © 1988 ELLC

Pre-communion Prayer: Adapted from a prayer in *The Divine Liturgy* of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom, © 1996 Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, p. 41 (alt.)

Prayer After Communion: Nunc Dimittis © 1988 ELLC

Dispersal The Pattern of Our Days, © 1996 Ruth Burgess, p. 107

Blessing
The Promise of His Glory, op. cit., p. 189 (alt.)

Further internet resources/links:

Mustard Bush: http://www.musbush.ucaqld.com.au

Uniting Church in Australia Working Group on Worship: http://nat.uca.org.au/TD/worship/

South Yarra Community Baptist Church: http://www.laughingbird.net

Icon from http://www.coptic.net/pictures/Icon.Nativity-1.jpg