

## **Port Phillip Prison, Christmas Day 2007**

### **Gathering - Cheryl**

You could easily think, here,  
that Christmas is just a romantic notion,  
a fairytale  
a plan of God's  
that didn't quite work.

You could easily think, today  
that this is a season for everyone else to celebrate  
a story for everyone else to believe.

But the story of Jesus' birth has more in common  
with the inside of a prison  
than it does with the glossy pictures in a Kmart catalogue  
and the sparkle of Carols by Candlelight.

So this Christmas  
we hear it again:  
this story told first by ridiculed prophets, dirty shepherds and a single mother  
of a love that is as old as the universe  
and as new as this moment

and we wait for God's love to be born again.

**[Carol]**

### **Bible reading -Ross**

#### **Luke 2:1-14**

About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. But the angel

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Written by Cheryl Lawrie

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Contact Cheryl on [cheryl.lawrie@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:cheryl.lawrie@victas.uca.org.au) for information.

said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said:

"Praise God in heaven!

Peace on earth to everyone

who pleases God."

## **Wondering / Reflection - Cheryl**

I wonder what it was like for Mary and Joseph when they couldn't find a home - when, at their most desperate moment, no-one wanted them.

I wonder what Mary was thinking when she went into labour. Did she scream? How much did it hurt? Was she scared?  
I wonder when her fear turned to hope.

I wonder what it was like for Joseph to watch her, and to wait.  
I wonder what it felt like for him to hold God in his hands.

I wonder what the shepherds thought, when the angels turned up and why the angels chose shepherds - or whether the angels sang to everyone, but the shepherds were the only ones who heard.  
I wonder if we would hear.

I wonder what made them believe.  
I wonder if we would believe.

## **Prayer - Cheryl**

This is the season for miracles, God,  
for angels to sing  
for stars to light the dark  
for hope to be born  
for love that comes in a human shape.

It's the season for miracles, and we pray for them today.

In the places in our lives that are empty  
we pray for the miracle that changes despair to hope.

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in the places in this prison that are too lonely  
we pray for the miracle that brings light into fear

in the moments in our days that seem endless  
we pray for the miracle that changes hopelessness into joy

in the horrors in our world that seem unfixable  
we pray for the miracle that brings peace into hatred.

You are the God of the impossible  
so come, God, make Christmas real again today,

through Jesus Christ, love born in our midst

amen.

**[Carol]**

## **Communion - Ross**

The bread and wine we're about to share  
joins us to the people throughout history and across the world  
who have come to this meal in search of life.

Just as Jesus' birth was for the whole world  
this bread and wine is for everyone

for the hungry  
for the lost  
for those who search  
and those who are found  
for those who question  
and those who know peace

this is bread and wine for everyone.

Let us pray  
Holy God, we praise you.  
Let the heavens be joyful,  
and the earth be glad.

We bless you for creating the whole world,  
for your promises to your people,  
and for the life we know in Jesus Christ your son.

Born of Mary, he shares our life.  
Eating with sinners, he welcomes us.  
Leading his followers, he guides us.  
Dying on the cross, he loves us.

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Risen from the dead, he gives new life.

On the night before Jesus died,  
he had supper with his friends.  
He took bread,  
thanked you, as we have thanked you,  
broke the bread,  
and gave it to his friends, saying:  
this is my body, given for you.  
Each time you do this, remember me.

After supper he took the wine,  
thanked you for it,  
and passed a it to his friends, saying:  
This cup is the new promise God has made with you  
in my blood.  
Each time you do this, remember me.

We pray, God of love, that you will  
send your Holy Spirit upon us and what we do here:  
that we and these signs, touched by your Spirit,  
may be signs of life and love to each other  
and to all the world.

Amen.

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ

The cup we take is a sharing in the new life of Christ.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

### ***Distribution***

## **Prayer for the world - Cheryl**

You choose the most unlikely, the darkest parts of life  
in which to be born.

So we pray that your love will be born again this Christmas  
in all parts of the world where love and hope are hard to find.

*Invite people to light candles and pray prayers*

In spite of all evidence to the contrary  
In spite of us having every reason not to believe  
Come Lord, come.

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Let your love be born again this Christmas.

Amen.

**[Carol]**

## **Sending out - Ross**

Go from here  
search for the love that God brings to life  
in every moment  
and in every place.

in the name of Christ  
Amen