

Carols, Candles and Cake



A Celebration



presented by MU Australia



Notes on the choice of Carols

Although we have suggested particular carols in this service, groups may choose to substitute other carols in their place.

Below we recommend alternatives taken from The Australian Hymn Book, however, you may wish to choose others, or listen to tapes or records of appropriate carols for one or more of the songs, depending on your group's resources and preferences.

Carol 1 Hark the Herald Angels Sing AHB 227
 Angels from the Realms of Glory AHB 235
 While Shepherds watched their Flocks AHB 223

Carol 2 Infant Holy, Infant Lowly AHB 225
 Unto us a Boy is Born AHB 218
 O Come all Ye Faithful AHB 228

Carol 3 At the Name of Jesus AHB 170
 Joy to the World AHB 224
 Once in Royal David's City AHB 237

Running the Service

The service is designed to have a number of people participate. You can make arrangements to suit your group's size and preferences.

Sections have been designated for a 'Leader', and these are printed in italics so they stand out.

There are also 3 'Prayers' which can be read by the leader or by other members, or read together as a group.

There are 3 Bible Readings, and 2 'Reflections' to be read out as well. These should be read by individuals, but one person could read all the Bible Readings, and another both Reflections, if your numbers are limited.

Carols, Candles and Cake – a Celebration

Leader: *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

Luke 2 v 13,14

Leader: *We join with the angels in praising God as we sing carols together.*

CAROL 1 Look to the skies, there's a celebration;

Bible Reading Luke 2 v 1-19 NIV

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

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. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

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

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."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Prayer

O Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we praise you for the precious gift of your Son. We praise you, Father, that you cared about us so much you were willing to send Jesus to live and die for us. We praise you that through Him it is possible to have peace with you and with each other.

Thank you, Lord, that we can celebrate each Christmas with great joy. **Amen**

(Music may be played for a time of reflection at this point.)

Leader: *Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. Luke 2 v 11*

Leader: *We Worship Jesus our Saviour, the Light of the World*

(If you are lighting candles, light them now)

CAROL 2 Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Scriptures say

Bible Reading Matthew 2:1- 12 NIV

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we come before you as the wise men did, in reverence and worship. Lord, we have no treasures of gold, incense and myrrh, but we offer you ourselves - all that we are - all that we can be - through your presence, your example and your love. Help us to live our lives as an act of worship to you each day. **Amen.**

Reflection: To be read aloud by one person

I wonder what it was like for Jesus as He left heaven, to become human, those
2000 years ago.

Leaving the perfect unity He had experienced with the Father and Holy Spirit from
before creation, stepping out of the heavenly glory into the now flawed world He
had created as perfect.

How long did those 33 years seem to the Timeless One as He experienced all the
consequences of humanity's sin?

How could He bear the total separation from His Father that occurred when the sin
of the whole world: past, present and future was placed on His sinless soul? He
was cut off from God so that we need never be.

When we find the changes in our lives hard to take, we can go to the Unchanging
One who became one of us for the love of us.
He surely understands.

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 v 14

Dear Lord,

Each year after Christmas I promise things will be different
next year.

I'll start my Christmas shopping earlier; I'll cut back on the extra frills;

I'll go to fewer functions and give more time to thinking about you.

I'll have a simple, more Christ-centred Christmas.

Now another Christmas is coming - and once again I'm caught up in all the
pressures that seem to be so much a part of our modern Christmas.

I need new eyes, Lord, eyes that will see the love we have for one another in the
gifts given and received, the meals prepared,
the letters and cards laboured over.

Eyes that will perceive your love for us in the flickering candles,
the bright decorations of celebration and the joyful carols,

So that I may at last take time to come to the manger and worship the greatest gift
of all, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Music may be played for a time of reflection at this point.)

Leader: *For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3 v 16*

Leader: *We serve our Lord, the Bread of Life, through following His example.*

CAROL 3 From heav'n you came, helpless babe

Bible Reading Philippians 2 v 4-11

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Prayer

Lord, we know you said you came not to be served, but to serve. Help us to reflect this willingness to serve others in our lives. Help us to follow your example of love and service, compassion and care, in our families and to those we meet.

We marvel that you should trust us with this responsibility. Help us not to treat it lightly, but with dedication and responsibility, and in true obedience to you. **Amen.**

Reflection: To be read aloud by one person

Jesus came to serve in whatever ways His Father asked. He became tired and weary but He knew the importance of refreshing Himself by spending time alone with God. Even in Gethsemane, in His desperate wish to avoid the suffering He knew He faced, His prayer was still “not my will, but yours”.

Often we want to serve God, but we want to choose the time, place and the way we serve. Have you ever found yourself in this situation?

“I stood before God like a willful child with my hands tightly clenched around the people I’d chosen and the work I was doing.

He said to me “Open your hands and let them go.”

And I said “No, I can’t, I don’t want to, there will be nothing left.”

He didn’t leave me, He firmly took my hands and waited while I opened my fingers one by one, and I cried each time. Then finally my hands lay before Him with nothing left – but He placed His

hands around mine and cupped the fingers up so He could fill them with Himself and with His will for me NOW.”

It was because of Jesus’ obedience in suffering death on the cross that God gave Him a name that is above every other name. God cannot give us the blessings He wants to give us, unless we are prepared to be obedient and to serve Him the way He has planned for us. Are you serving God your way, or His?

DEDICATION

(sing together)

HYMN: Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.



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