

Christmas 2022

The Wonder of CHRISTMAS



When I first thought about *The Wonder of Christmas*, I found myself thinking of young children and family gatherings on Christmas Day. The wonder, the joy and the excitement of Christmas can be clear on young faces and through their level of energy. How many sleeps till Christmas? Children up far too early on Christmas Day so they can open presents. Seeing the joy of children can also bring great delight to parents and grandparents as well.

The joy and wonder of Christmas can also be found in giving. The giving of presents, the giving of hospitality, giving as an expression of care and love we have for another. Also, *The Wonder of Christmas* can be expressed through providing gifts to people we have never met and will never meet. We might give through Uniting, to Welfare at our church and through the Shoe Boxes of Operation Christmas Child.

The Wonder of Christmas comes through to us as we reflect on the story of the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph, a humble and poor couple plucked from a small village. Mary would give birth to Jesus in a bustling town that they were forced to visit. Why would God choose this young couple? In fact, why would God choose anyone? We have learnt that Mary and Joseph were faithful, humble, and open to God. Choosing this particular couple is part of the mystery and wonder of Christmas.

The first to hear the news of the birth are shepherds in the field taking care of their flock at night. Shepherds were not highly regarded, even treated with suspicion in the community. And yet Jesus came for those on the edge, on the margins – sinners, tax collectors, the poor, the sick – and the comfortable too. Thinking about the fact that shepherds heard the news first does seem appropriate.

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King David was a shepherd. Psalm 23 offers an image of God as the Shepherd of God's people. Priests in the Scriptures were called to shepherd their people as are ministers and pastors today. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. Again, this is all part of *The Wonder of Christmas*.

And then there is the wonder of Jesus' birth in a stable, lying where animals sought shelter. The birth of Jesus was not in a home, or a hospital, and not even in a room. Born in a scene of great humility and poverty. Born in a place of mess and smells. Born to parents forced to travel. We affirm this child Jesus, as Emmanuel, meaning God with us. Part of *The Wonder of Christmas* is recognising that Jesus was born in a place of mess, and yet how appropriate is that. God comes among us in Jesus, and was born and ministered in the midst of our messy world, reaching out to people who had messed up their lives. And yet we know and rejoice, that this birth changed the world.

The Wonder of Christmas. The wonder of Jesus' birth. The wonder of Jesus touching and changing lives. The wonder of Jesus showing us God, and God's love. The wonder of Jesus loving us and accepting us and saying to each of us "follow me". We will celebrate all this and more this Advent and Christmas season.

Have a blessed, reflective and safe Christmas.

Neil, Di, Jemma & Joanne.

Join us in person this Christmas
or online at www.gwuc.org.au/live

6 December

8pm Remembrance Service

11 December

5pm Indonesian Christmas Celebration

18 December

10am Nativity Worship

24 December

Christmas Eve

7pm All-Age Worship

11pm Coffee & Carols

(Coffee available from 10.30pm)

25 December

Christmas Day

8.30am & 10am Worship

31 December

New Year's Eve

11pm Worship

Services in January

10am each Sunday

29 January

10am Backpack Blessing

Usual worship times will resume from

February 2023

8am, 9.15am, 11am, 2pm & 5pm

Come along and see our 2022 Christmas Installation

W·O·N·D·E·R

from 18 December

ALL WELCOME!