

The Feast of the Christ Child

A Christmas Communion liturgy from Iona



Pat Bennett

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Opening responses

Leader: Starlight and song
have once again summoned us
home to the stable.

All: And so,
with the beasts of the field,
and the humble and the high,
we have come to gaze
on the face of God.

Leader: Story and supper
have once again drawn us
home to God's table.

All: And here,
through words worn smooth with telling,
and gifts given life through sharing,
may we once again see and know you, Emmanuel –
God with us and for us.

Approach

Leader: Christmas Child, as we wait now for you,
steal softly into our lives:

All: Still our clamorous busyness
with the quiet of your coming.

Leader: Christmas Child, as we look now for you,
steal softly into our minds:

All: Transfigure our dull thinking
with the colours of your seeing.

Leader: Christmas Child, as we long now for you,
steal softly into our hearts:

All: Enrich our meagre loving
with the warmth of your being.

Leader: Christmas Child,
as at Bethlehem's stable,

All: Steal softly in among us now
and heal and hallow us
with your Presence.

Confession

Christmas Child –
becoming flesh, you showed what it was
to serve and share,
to live and love,
as God intended.

As we stand at the stable door
we confess that all too often
our serving and sharing
have concealed or mocked your generosity,
rather than making it present and plain.

Silence/Kyrie

As we stand at the stable door
we confess that all too often
our living and loving
have displaced or distorted your image,
rather than making it present and plain.

Silence/Kyrie

Christmas Child,
as we kneel again at your manger
restore, renew and reshape us
so that our serving and sharing,
living and loving
may,
now and always,
incarnate you in the world.

Prayers of the people

Suggested response:

Christmas Child,
bring in your light and your love.

Invitation

This is the feast of the Christmas Child –
a place where heaven and earth coincide,
and eternity once more condenses into time
as God is seen and known
in the simple and the small,
in story and song,
and in bread and wine.

So come –
 whether you are drawn by joy or driven by need,
 whether you walk with confident step, or stumble on faltering feet,
 whether you understand the meaning, or can only wonder at the mystery –
 come and gaze on the face of God
 for all are welcome in the stable.

Communion narrative

The story of the Christmas Child
 is the story of Jesus –
 joyfully accepting the restriction of flesh
 and entering the constraint of time
 to show how life and love
 fully lived and freely offered
 transcend their limitations:

It is the story of Jesus –
 seated at a table with his friends
 breaking bread

the bread is broken

and pouring wine

the wine is poured

to show how life and love
 fully lived and freely offered
 change the world.

It is the story of Jesus –
 accepting a kiss and carrying a cross

to show how life and love
fully lived and freely shared
count no cost.

It is the story of Jesus –
confined in a tomb but rising with the dawn
to show how life and love
fully lived and freely shared
defy and defeat even death.

It is the story of Emmanuel –
God, now and always
with us
and
for us.

Thanksgiving

So, as we take this bread and wine –
in remembrance of that life and love –
we give thanks
for the healing and hope
which spring
from the coming, living, dying and rising
of the Christmas Child.

And,
with those who gather round his crib,
with the angel choirs,
and the singing planets,
we join in creation's song of joy ...

Sanctus and Benedictus

Consecration

And as we follow the example of Jesus
 send down your Holy Spirit
 on us,
 and on these gifts of bread and wine,
 that the story of the Christmas Child –
 of life fully lived and freely shared –
 may continue on
 in us and through us,
 until the world is transformed.

The Peace

May the peace of the Christmas Child –
 the soft peace of a starlit night,
 the noisy peace of a crowded stable,
 the challenging peace of life and love
 fully lived and freely shared –
 enfold, enrich and energise you.

The sharing of the gifts

Emmanuel
 who came to us in the Christmas Child,
 and who comes to us still
 through the living, loving and sharing of others,
 offers these signs of his Presence
 and invites us to join our story with theirs.

Bread and wine are shared.

Closing words

Leader: The starlight and song,
story and supper,
which called us home
now compel us to go out.

All: May we who have knelt
at the manger
always have room
to hold within ourselves the Christmas Child.

May we who have gazed on the face of God
learn to live fully,
and to share freely
all that we have and are.
So may Emmanuel – God with us and for us –
be once again
incarnated in the world.

Pat Bennett

THE FEAST OF THE CHRIST CHILD

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Stock code: PL10251

ISBN: 978-1-84952-361-5

Published by

Wild Goose Publications, Fourth Floor, Savoy House,
140 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow G2 3DH, UK,
the publishing division of the Iona Community.
Scottish Charity No. SC003794. Limited Company Reg.No. SC096243.
www.ionabooks.com

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For more information:

Wild Goose Publications
Fourth Floor, Savoy House
140 Sauchiehall Street,
Glasgow G2 3DH, UK

Tel. +44 (0)141 332 6292
Fax +44 (0)141 332 1090
e-mail: admin@ionabooks.com

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