

REMEMBERED AT CHRISTMAS
A special service offered by
Gisborne Presbyterian Parish at Matawhero
7 pm Wednesday 11 December 2019



Christmas can be a sad time when you have lost significant people in your life. Everyone else seems to be celebrating joyfully but you find that difficult because someone special to you is no longer physically with you. Or maybe there is a challenging situation in your family that brings pain, not celebration. If you have come to remember someone important to you, or otherwise reflect in a quiet meditative way, this service *Remembered at Christmas*, includes a time when, if you want to, there will be the opportunity to light a candle to honour and remember your special someone or light a candle to symbolise shining light into / praying about a particular situation.

Welcome and Gathering

Give thanks to the Lord who is good.

God's steadfast love endures for ever.

Grace and peace be with you.

And also with you.

Call to Worship:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Through God life came to be. The Word became life and this life was the light of the world.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Prayer:

God of mercy, hear our prayer for ourselves and our families who live with painful memories of loss and challenging experiences. We seek your strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the future. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and birth, despair and promise.

Amen.

Sing: Brother, sister, let me serve you

AA 8

**Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you,
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.**

**We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.**

**I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear,
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.**

**I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you,
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.**

**When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love, and agony.**

**Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you,
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.**

Richard A. Gillard

Candle lighting:

We light this first candle to remember those we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, and the memories that bind them to us in this season.

May God's eternal love surround them.

Silence

We light this second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, acknowledging that from God we can receive the gift of deep peace.

Refresh, restore, renew us, O God.

Silence

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmastime. We pause and remember the past weeks and months: the disbelief, the anger, the downtimes, the joy and sorrow of memories, the hugs of family and friends who care for us.

We give thanks for all the support and care we have received.

Let us remember that after every night comes the dawn of a new day.

Silence

We light this fourth candle to remember our faith and the gift of hope that the Christmas story offers us. We remember that God who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

Gentle God of love, help us to reach out together for the light of faith, for renewal and recovery.

Silence

In the centre of this circle, we light the Christ candle, for Christ who is in the centre of our lives. God knows all the chaos of our thoughts and emotions. God offers us hope and healing.

We remember the One who shows us the way and brings the light.

Silence

We pray:

Comforting God, wrap us in your love in this time of remembrance. May the light of your Holy Spirit shine for us like candles in the darkness. Help us to be aware of your guiding light beaming strongly for us as we seek to live life fully and wholly. We cherish the special ways in which we have been touched by our loved ones. We thank you for the gift their lives have been to us. Now comfort us, encourage us, empower us. **Amen**

Readings:

The writers of the Psalms often put into words their own experiences but they connect with the experience of others.

From Psalm 22:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

**O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer,
And by night, but I find no rest.**

In you our ancestors trusted. They trusted you and you delivered them. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there seems no-one to help.

God does not hide from me.

When I cry to God, I will be heard.

Thanks be to God.

We read together Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul;

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For Thou art with me;

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;

Thou anointest my head with oil;

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

From Romans 8

Nothing can separate us from the love of God – not trouble, pain or persecution.

In all these things we have an overwhelming victory through God who loves us.

I am absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of heaven or monarch of earth, no power from anywhere, nor anything else in the whole world, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God.

Lighting Individual Candles – while listening to reflective music

These small candles represent the ones we have loved and lost but whose love remains with us. These people were not perfect, but through them something of the goodness of life touched us, not just in times past but today.

You are invited to light one or more of these candles as your personal symbol of those you are remembering at this time.....

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Responsive prayer

O God, friend and companion, we give thanks that you travel with us on life's journey. As we search for reasons to hope,

grace us with your gentleness and compassion.

May all who have experienced the loss of loved ones through death be aware of your comfort and peace.

Heal us, O God.

Ease the sadness of those who are separated from loved ones, through illness, migration, divorce or past hurts.

Heal us, O God.

We pray for the sick in our community and those who care for them.

May they receive your comfort and blessing.

We pray for those who are experiencing loss and hardship, Caused by unemployment or financial insecurity.

May they be aware of your deep peace.

O God who travels with us in the shadows, we recall your promise that in our brokenness there is hope of wholeness; in our emptiness there is hope of fullness.

Heal us, O God.

May we be wise, gentle and patient with ourselves.

**In this Christmas season may we find consolation amid the pain,
and some joy amid the sadness.**

God-with-us, inhabit our hearts and our lives as once you came into the world on that first Christmas night.

May you be born again in us. Amen

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us

and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

for ever and ever. Amen.

We sing: Silent Night

Silent night, holy night:

all is calm, all is bright

round the virgin mother and child,

holy infant so tender and mild,

sleep in heavenly peace,

sleep in heavenly peace.

**Silent night, holy night:
shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly host sing "Alleluia;
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.'**

**Silent night, holy night:
wondrous star, lend your light;
with the angels let us sing
Alleluia to our King;
Christ our Saviour is born,
Christ our Saviour is born.**

Blessing:

Go in peace, knowing that God loves you. God will bless you.
God's light shines in your darkness and the darkness has never put it
out.

Thanks be to God. Amen

