

The Advent wreath that you see in our church has been burning throughout Advent, the season that leads us to this celebration of Christmas. Each week we have lit another candle, each candle signifying a different theme, as we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ among us, born in humility, born in the manger.

Christmas celebrates our creator God's action in human affairs to give a different future, one of peace, reconciliation and hope.

Christians understand that the birth of Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise to renew our relationship with God. Even at his birth Jesus serves to bring together even those who in that time and place were considered outsiders, people like poor shepherds watching their flocks or eastern monarchs.

Christmas tells us about the unfolding of God's promise then and now. It tells us about the direction of God's working amongst people. And it challenges our imaginations as we look at the world.

Australians of every background can find good reason to be dismayed about contemporary events near and far. Conflict is part of the human condition, seemingly more today than ever. But Jesus' birth points us all to a different reality. His birth reveals a power to change and transform that is greater than ourselves.

The baby of Bethlehem reveals the glory of God, and seeks to bring to God's people a light to enlighten all those who live apart from God. Jesus is the one sent from God to change human existence one person at a time and for all of us together.

This happens as we, each one of us, are changed by this revelation of God – the eternal Word of God (as the Gospel writer, John, describes Jesus) born into human form. And as we are changed we join in God's work, that work of bringing hope, peace, joy, and love into the lives of those around us and into the world.

To you, and to your families and your loved ones I extend the blessing of the Word made Flesh – may Christ be born anew in you, and his light guide you in your lives ahead.

May the Christ-child and all the Saints walk with you in this wonderful Christmas season...

*Sam*